



# REPORT

OF THE

## INDIAN FAMINE COMMISSION.

### PART I.

### FAMINE RELIEF

Presented to both Houses of Par-

liament of Her Majesty.



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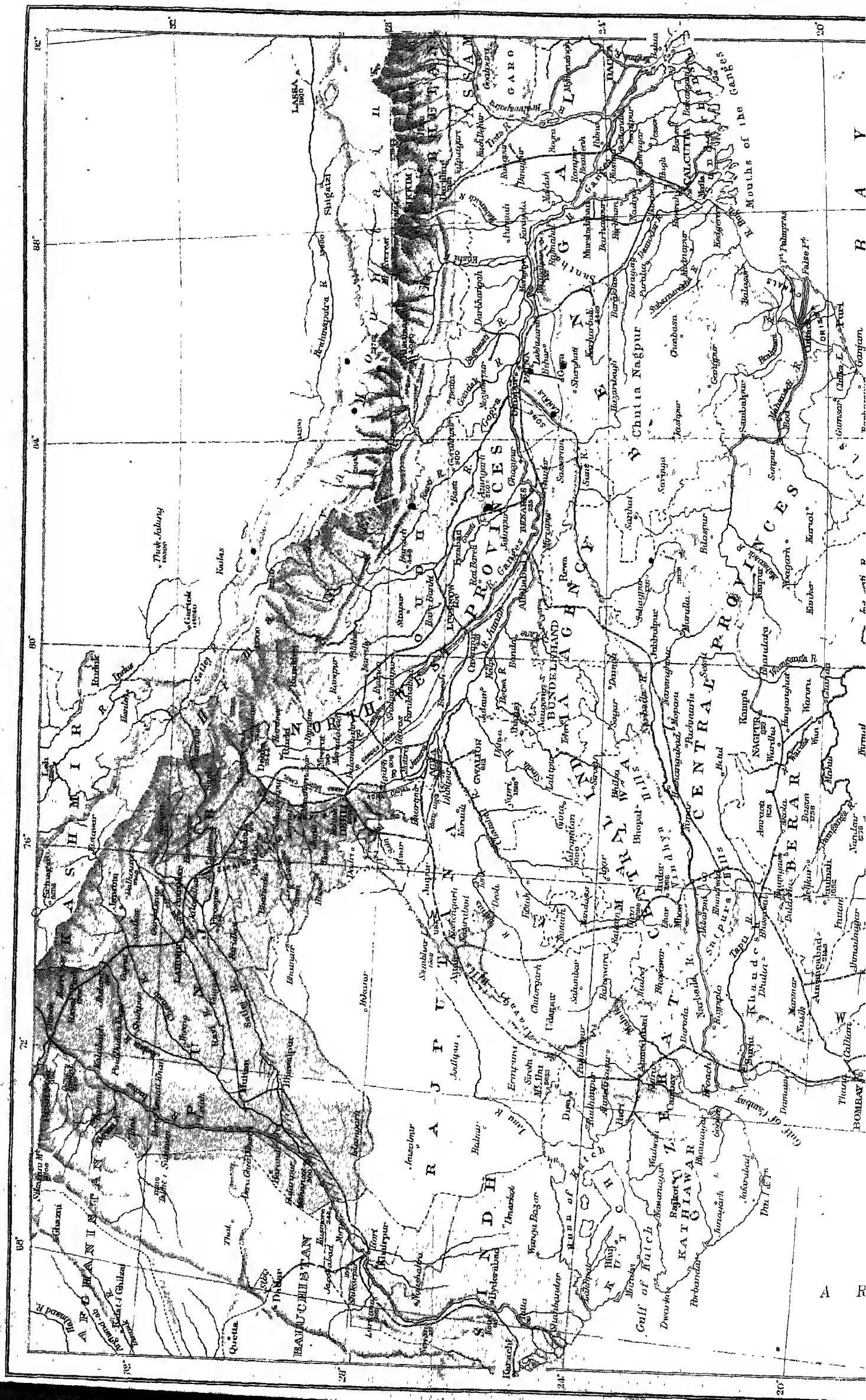
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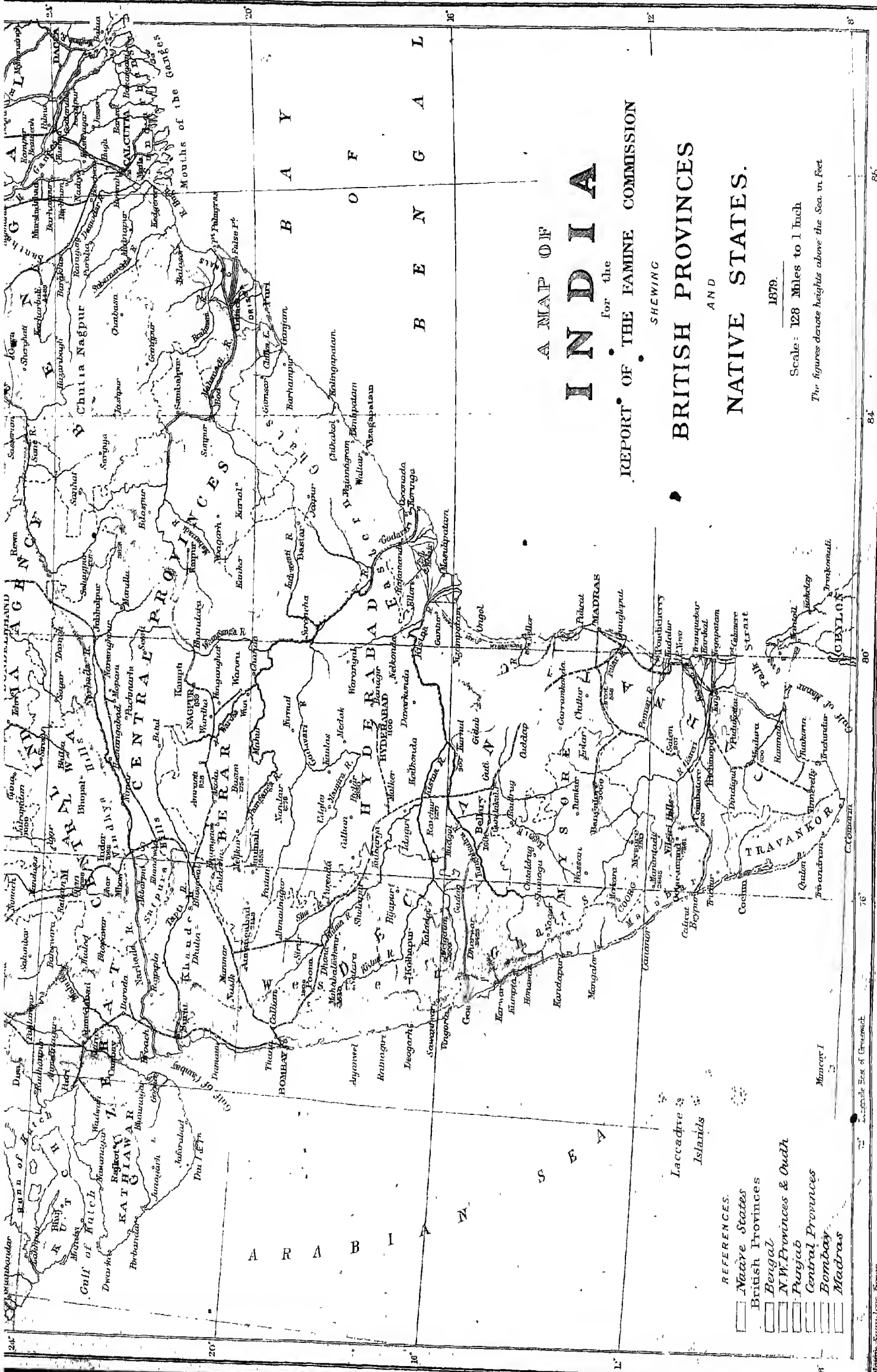
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A MAP OF  
**INDIA**  
For the  
**REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION**  
SHEWING  
**BRITISH PROVINCES**  
AND  
**NATIVE STATES.**

1879.  
Scale: 128 Miles to 1 inch  
The figures denote heights above the Sea in Feet

- REFERENCES.
- Native States
  - British Provinces
  - Bengal
  - N.W. Provinces & Oudh
  - Punjab
  - Central Provinces
  - Bombay
  - Madras



# REPORT

## OF THE

# INDIAN FAMINE COMMISSION.

### PART I. PRELIMINARY.

Instructions of the Secretary of State and Government of India.—Arrangement of the Report.—Geographical Sketch of India.—Population and Climate.

1. THE Despatch of the Secretary of State for India which directed the appointment of our Commission thus stated the general object which he had in view. "It is evident that the protection of the people of India from the effects of the uncertainty of the seasons will constitute in the future no inconsiderable portion of the work of the Government. It is therefore a duty to collect with the utmost care all information which may assist future administrators in the task of limiting the range or mitigating the intensity of these calamities." It was pointed out that information was required principally on two classes of subjects. Of these one would include all that related to the measures to be adopted where severe scarcity or famine had actually arisen, and would involve an inquiry into the results of past experience as to the best system of famine-relief, with special reference to such topics as the size and class of relief-works, the nature of the tests to be employed, the amount of wage, the quantity of food necessary to sustain health and strength in famine-labourers, and the conditions under which Government might interfere with the ordinary course of trade in the supply of food in a tract suffering from famine. The other part of the Commission's inquiry was to be directed to the question "how far it is possible for Government, by its action, to diminish the severity of famines, or to place the people in a better condition for enduring them." Under this head, the nature and extent of the protection to be obtained from increased irrigation and from improved communications, the manner and degree in which they can properly be extended, and the question how far the saving in relief-expenditure might justify the construction of works not otherwise remunerative, were indicated as topics especially deserving of careful consideration. Attention was directed to opinions which had been expressed that the effect of the tenure prevalent in Madras was to discourage the construction of wells, and that in some parts of the Deccan the progress of irrigation had been impeded by the poverty of the ryots; and to the importance of ascertaining how far the facts supported such views.

2. The Government of India, when appointing the Commission, somewhat amplified the instructions conveyed in the despatch of the Secretary of State, and indicated with more distinctness several topics which it was especially desirable that the Commission should investigate.

3. First, attention was drawn to the possible existence of peculiarities in the administrative system of particular Provinces, which might tend to assist or retard the action of Government in its struggle with famine. With regard to the results of famine, it was pointed out that, though it might be impossible to ascertain exactly the extent of the mortality directly attributable to famine, the Commission might obtain fairly trustworthy information as to the classes and sexes which especially suffered, the effect of famine on the birth-rate of the country, and generally "how far local influences, peculiarities of administration or tenure, climate, soil, water, density of population, systems of cultivation, &c., have tended to mitigate or intensify the inevitable effects of famine." It was also remarked that the inquiry into the alleged unwillingness of the Madras ryot to expend money on means of irrigation, by reason of the ryotwari tenure, might be extended so as to embrace other analogous questions, and that the task of the Commissioners would not be completely discharged unless they considered such matters as the comparative power of the agricultural population in different Provinces to resist the effects of drought, their comparative wealth, and the relation, in each case, of their well-being to the varying forms of land-tenure.

Summary of Secretary of State's Despatch, dated 10th Jan. 1878. Para. 5.

Para. 8.

Para. 10.

Para. 9.

Para. 11.

Paras. 12-1

Para. 17.

Para. 19.

Government of India. Resolution (Public Works Famine), 16th May 1878.

Effect of local influences.

Para. 3.

Para. 4.

Para. 5.



- Character of relief works, Para. 6.
4. As regards the system of relief, after observations as to the commonly accepted necessity for applying tests of some kind before giving relief, and reference to the importance of determining what those tests should be and how they should be applied, the attention of the Commission was specially directed to the opinion at which the Government arrived after the famine of 1874, "that large works were suitable at an early stage of distress, and smaller works subsequently, as the necessity for them arises;" and to the policy, laid down in the Viceroy's Minute of 12th August 1877, that "at the beginning of a famine, relief employment, at a subsistence-rate of wage, should be provided on large fully supervised works which will be of permanent use to the country;" and the Commission was desired to report whether the experience of recent famines had tended to confirm or modify the policy thus defined, and especially whether small works near the people's homes may, under any and what circumstances, be accepted as a part of the relief system. Further, in connexion with this branch of the subject, many points were noticed relating to the system of relief to be followed in the future, and particularly that of the proper extent and limitation of the duty of the Government in respect to the supply, importation, and distribution of food required for districts suffering from famine.
- Paras. 7-8, 10.
- Para. 9.
- Irrigation. Para. 11.
5. With regard to the second branch of the inquiry, it was pointed out that the questions of the degree in which irrigation may be looked upon as an efficient protection, of what has been or can be done by Government in this direction, of the actual effect of existing irrigation, and of the influence of forests on the rainfall and the denudation of the soil, had led to much controversy; and the Government desired that the whole subject should be exhaustively treated, special notice being taken of any defects of administration that may have contributed to retard the extension of irrigation in the less successful works of this nature.
- Para. 12.
- Agricultural improvement. Para. 13.
6. Another field of inquiry suggested was that of practical improvements in agriculture, and of the best means of giving an impetus to the efforts of the State to encourage this branch of national industry.
- Communications. Para. 14.
7. With regard to communications, we were desired to submit any information that might assist the Government in regulating its action as to the extension of railways, and in judging of the practicability of improving or adding to the internal water communications; the reduction of cost of transport obtained by these means being of primary importance in the distribution of food supplies. Attention was also directed to the difficulties which, during the recent famines, arose from the inadequacy of the existing railway staff and rolling-stock when subject to the abnormal pressure to which famine times necessarily give rise, and some other details of railway management.
- Provincial responsibility. Paras. 15, 16.
8. The Commission was further reminded of the recent declarations of the Government of India, that in future the responsibility for outlay occasioned by famine relief should primarily devolve on the Provincial Governments, and suggestions were invited for developing and facilitating the execution of the policy of the Government of India in this direction.
- Recent distress in North-Western Provinces. Paras. 17-19.
9. Inquiry was also suggested as to any light which the history of the distress of 1877-78 in the North-Western Provinces might throw on the question of famine relief, more particularly with reference to the expediency of supplementing relief based on works by a proper system of village inspection, and of strengthening the subordinate civil district agency for this purpose at a very early stage of threatened famine or general scarcity.
- Miscellaneous. Paras. 20, 21, 22.
10. Agricultural statistics,—gratuitous relief and the restrictions under which it can be safely given,—emigration,—suspension and remission of revenue,—deficiencies in the existing district organization with regard to the supervision of relief,—and the relations to be observed with Native States in famine management, are among other topics expressly brought to the Commission's notice.
- Issue of inquiries by the Commission.
11. We considered that it would be impossible to deal in any satisfactory manner with the varied and difficult subjects thus proposed for our consideration without further information, more detailed and exact than could be collected from the Government records at our command. As to many subjects no information was available: as to many others such information as could be had was deficient in accuracy or completeness, and light could be thrown on them only by means of direct inquiry from the classes of persons conversant with each. We thought, accordingly, that the first step towards a proper fulfilment of the duty laid upon us was to ascertain, with all the fulness and exactness of which the case admitted, the facts with which we had to deal, and the opinions of qualified persons upon them. A carefully-considered series of inquiries was therefore drawn out, and each of the

Local Governments was requested to entrust the collection of the required information to the officials most competent to give valuable and trustworthy replies, and to invite qualified non-official persons also to co-operate in like manner. The information thus collected has furnished us with much very valuable knowledge as to the material condition of the people, and in many important directions serves as the basis of that portion of our Report which deals with the administration of famine relief.

12. The Commission decided to supplement and complete these inquiries by visiting the several Provinces in turn, and there holding personal communication with some of the best-informed local officials or other persons of weight. The oral evidence thus taken, both as to the management of famine-relief and as to general administration, supplies another principal part of the body of authority on which we have formed our opinions as to the condition of the inhabitants, the best means of counter-acting the results of famine, and generally of promoting the well-being of the country.

13. With a view to the more thorough investigation of the various matters connected with irrigation, especially in Orissa and Madras, to which the attention of the Commission had been particularly directed, we considered it desirable that a Committee of specially-selected officers should conduct an inquiry on the spot; and the Report submitted by them throws great light on these subjects.

14. Before proceeding further in the discussion of the questions referred to us, it will be convenient to state the order and general manner in which we propose to deal with them. We shall first give a concise sketch of the geography, population, and climate of British India, indicating generally the degree in which each part of the country is exposed to famine. Next we shall treat of the measures to be adopted for famine relief, prefacing our conclusions and recommendations by a concise historical review of past famines and the measures adopted to meet them. We shall then deal with the inquiry (to use the words of Lord Salisbury's despatch) "how far it is possible for Government by its action to diminish the severity of famines, or to place the people in a better condition to endure them." This part of our Report will be prefaced by a general account of the country in relation to the social and economical condition of the people, the form of administration, the progress of material improvements, and other kindred subjects, on the consideration of which our reply to this part of the inquiry must be based. The Report will be accompanied by a detailed history of all the past famines regarding which sufficient records exist, a model famine code, and appendices containing a collection of discussions on certain topics which call for fuller consideration than would have been convenient in the Report, and selections from the evidence and documents of which we have made use.

15. The total area of British India is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million square miles, and the population 240 millions. Of this nearly 600,000 square miles, containing a population estimated at 50 millions, belong to the Native States not under British administration; the remainder, about 900,000 square miles, with 190 millions of people, is under direct British rule.

16. The distribution of area and population among the principal provinces under British administration is shown below:—

		Area in Square Miles.	Population in Millions.	
British Provinces	Bengal, with Assam	200,000	65	
	Madras	140,000	$31\frac{1}{2}$	
	Bombay	77,000	$14\frac{1}{4}$	
	Sindh	47,000	2	
	North-West Provinces and Oudh	105,000	42	
	Punjab	105,000	$17\frac{1}{2}$	
	Central Provinces	85,000	$8\frac{1}{4}$	
	Burmah	90,000	$2\frac{3}{4}$	
	Ajmir and Coorg	4,000	$\frac{1}{2}$	
		853,000	183 $\frac{3}{4}$	
Native States administered by British officers.	Mysore	29,000	5	
	Berar	18,000	$2\frac{1}{4}$	
		47,000	$7\frac{1}{4}$	
Total		900,000	191	



Native  
States.

17. The area and population of the chief Native States not under British administration are as follows:—

	Area in Square Miles.	Population in Millions.
States of Rajputana - - -	131,000	10
Do. of Central India and Bundelkhand -	89,000	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
Hyderabad (Nizam) - - -	80,000	9
Baroda - - -	4,000	2
Native States in Bengal (chiefly Hill States) -	46,000	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Do. Madras - - -	10,000	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Do. Bombay - - -	66,000	6 $\frac{1}{4}$
Do. the North-West Provinces -	5,000	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Do. Punjab - - -	115,000	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
Do. Central Provinces - - -	29,000	1
Total - - -	575,000	49

Tracts in  
which the  
British Go-  
vernment is  
not respon-  
sible for  
relieving  
famine.

18. In considering the obligation to provide relief and protection from famine for the population of India, it must be borne in mind that the responsibility does not rest on the British Government as regards the vast area under Native rulers. Cashmere, Rajputana, Central India, the Native States in Guzerat and the Southern Maratta country, and the territories of the Nizam, have all in various years suffered from the visitation of famine, in the relief of which the British Government has not been able to interpose otherwise than by advice, except where the administration has temporarily passed into its own hands. Moreover several of the earlier famines recorded in the historical part of our Report occurred in provinces which were not at the time under British rule. The districts in the Deccan in which drought has most frequently caused anxiety to the Government and called for measures of relief, came under British administration in 1818. The parts of the North-Western Provinces which famine has repeatedly attacked were ceded or conquered in 1801 and 1803. The cession of the greater part of Orissa dates also from 1803. Bellary and Cuddapah, with the Carnatic districts of the east coast of Madras, were ceded at the beginning of the century, and Karnul was annexed in 1824. The Central Provinces passed under British administration partly by cession in 1818, partly by lapse in 1854. The coast territory between the Mahanadi and the Kistna rivers, known as the Northern Circars, was ceded in 1760; and the government of Bengal was not formally undertaken by the British until 1772. The Punjab was not annexed till 1848, nor Oudh till 1856.

Temperature.

19. India may be approximately described as lying half to the north and half to the south of the tropic. The whole country, excepting a comparatively small fraction of mountain, is subject to very great summer heat. In the southern half, though the maximum heat is less than in the north, the winter portion of the year is much less cold, so that the climate has generally a tropical character throughout the year, modified to some extent by the elevation of the central region of high land which rises to about 2,000 feet above the sea, while the provinces of the north have a distinct season of winter cold, when the climate is that of the warmer temperate zone.

Geography:  
The north-  
ern plain  
and the  
central  
elevated  
plateau.

20. The Northern Provinces of British India occupy a great unbroken plain which extends from the Himalaya mountains to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and is traversed by the Rivers Indus and Ganges and their tributaries. Of the central and southern region the larger part consists of a hilly plateau or table-land, roughly triangular in shape, which projects into the Indian Ocean. Of the western flank of this plateau, the southern half forms the mountains known as the Western Ghats, which rise abruptly from the sea to an elevation that seldom exceeds 4,000 feet, though the Nilgiri mountains, near the southern end of the range, rise to 8,000 feet; and the northern half constitutes the Aravali hills, which separate Rajputana from the plain of the Indus. The eastern margin is less sharply defined, is less in elevation, and has a greater breadth of lowlying land between its foot and the sea; the southern part is known as the Eastern Ghats, and on the north it merges in the hills of Western Bengal. The northern border of the plateau is still less sharply defined, and gradually declines in the north-west, where it breaks up into small hills, and the line which separates it from the great northern plain can hardly be distinguished.

Altitude of  
the plateau.

21. The average altitude of this central plateau is about 1,500 feet above the sea, being greatest in the south, where, in the Province of Mysore, it rises to 3,000 feet,

and generally greater on the west than on the east, so that nearly all the larger rivers—the Kaveri, Kistnah, Godavari, and Mahanadi—run off to the eastward, the Tapti and Narbada alone flowing to the west.

22. The territories of the Punjab occupy the north-western angle of the great plain, and extend along the Himalaya west of the Jumna, up to the frontier of Afghanistan, also stretching southward a little beyond the point where the five rivers which give the name to the province unite in the Indus. The tract lying along the foot of the Himalaya is well watered, but the rain-fall everywhere decreases as the mountain range is more distant. In the southern districts between the Satlej and the Jumna there is barely sufficient rain for agricultural purposes, and here the failure of the monsoon has frequently involved the country in droughts. The districts west of the Satlej at a distance from the northern mountains are still more deficient in rain, and rely for their cultivation almost exclusively on artificial irrigation; they are from this cause to a great extent uncultivated, for though the soil is believed to be fertile if supplied with irrigation, and the many large rivers that traverse the country afford abundant water, it has till now been but partially utilised. Between the Punjab and the sea lies Sindh, a country almost wholly without rain, and almost entirely dependent on artificial irrigation from the Indus for its agriculture and its power to support its scanty population. But here, as in the Southern Punjab, the supply of river water is not liable to such serious failure as to produce general loss of the crops, and famine from drought is hardly known.

The Punjab  
and Sindh.

23. The North-Western Provinces and Oudh form the upper part of the great plain of the Ganges to the west of Bengal, and lie between the Himalaya mountains and the hilly border of the central plateau, the northern margin of which comprises parts of Bengal, the Central Provinces, and Rajputana. The average rain-fall increases as we pass from west to east, and also as the Himalaya is approached. In the tract lying along the foot of the mountains much rice is grown, and it is subject to severe losses of its crops, and has at various times suffered considerably. The region between the Ganges and the Jumna is now almost completely protected from drought by its irrigation canals. But the districts south of the Jumna below Agra are poor in soil, their rain-fall is precarious, and little has been done there for artificial irrigation; and this region has been severely afflicted whenever drought has visited the province.

The North-  
Western  
Provinces  
and Oudh.

24. Bengal, which occupies the deltas of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, is flanked on the east by the hilly regions which separate it from the valley of the Irrawaddy, and on the west by another hilly tract which forms the eastern border of the central plateau already described. This province, which is chiefly a great alluvial plain producing rice, is alike the most populous and productive of any in British India. In the eastern half of it drought is unknown; in the western half and the southern portion, called Orissa, there have occasionally been severe famines, due not so much to absolute failure of the rains as to their premature cessation at a time when the rice crop particularly needs water. Assam, lying along the valley of the Brahmaputra, is a tract which has never yet been visited by drought; it contains a vast area which will in the future afford an opening for a great extension of cultivation. Sylhet and Cachar, two of the more eastern districts of the delta, and somewhat similar in character to Assam, are for administrative purposes united with that province.

Bengal and  
Assam.

25. Between the valley of the Narbada and the southern border of the Punjab and the North-West Provinces lie the Native States of Rajputana and Central India, occupying a tract of high and hilly land, and extending at a lower level to the west of this hilly region as far as the confines of Sindh. This western region in its main characteristics is not greatly removed from desert. The eastern tract, which is a portion of the northern plateau, is not of any remarkable fertility, and except at the south-west angle, where the rain-fall is comparatively certain, is much exposed to the risk of drought which attends the failure of the south-west monsoon.

The Native  
States of  
Central  
India.

26. The Central Provinces and Berar include the districts lying along the upper parts of the Tapti and Narbada rivers, along several of the northern affluents of the Godavari, and along the western feeders of the Mahanadi. Berar lies between the Central Provinces and the north-eastern portion of the Bombay Deccan, and forms the northern part of the Nizam's territory, though administered by British officers. These districts, though everywhere more or less intersected by hills, include in many parts very fertile plains or valleys. The western districts of the Central Provinces lying along the valleys of the Narbada and Tapti enjoy a plentiful rain-fall which has never been known to fail; and the only tracts which have ever suffered from drought are those to the north

The Centr  
Provinces  
and Berar

of the Narbada, which share the characteristics of the hilly region described in the preceding paragraph, and the eastern districts, which are contiguous and in their nature somewhat akin to Orissa.

Bombay. 27. The Bombay Presidency, the north-west portion of which, Sindh, has been already described, includes the territory of the western coast from the limits of Madras to the frontier of Baluchistan, and the portion of the upland plateau of the Deccan which borders on the Western Ghats. The narrow strip of lowland country between the Western Ghats and the sea is well watered, and where there is sufficient depth of soil is richly productive. The central Bombay districts on the Deccan plateau have a poor and shallow soil, and the portion beyond the influence of the heavy rain-fall on the Ghats is exposed to severe drought, and has frequently suffered extreme distress. Khandesh, which may be described as an extension of the Deccan at a lower level along the Tapti valley, has a richer soil. Guzerat is the still richer lowland region about the mouths of the Narbada and the other rivers which fall into the Gulf of Cambay. The Native States of Kathiawar and Kutch have a poorer soil and a smaller rain-fall than the British districts, and are therefore more liable to suffer severely from drought.

Hyderabad. 28. Hyderabad, or the territory of the Nizam, is divided into two distinct regions. On the west the country is of the same character as the Deccan districts of Bombay, and this tract, especially at its southern edge, has frequently been visited by drought and famine. The eastern part is more hilly, and shares in the influences of the north-east monsoon. It contains numerous tanks and grows much rice, and no serious drought has been recorded here.

Madras and Mysore. 29. The Presidency of Madras includes (1) a part of the Deccan plateau adjacent to the southern districts of Bombay and the territory of the Nizam; (2) the region below this plateau, which occupies a broad belt on the east coast from Orissa southwards and a narrow one on the Malabar coast, and extends from the extremity of the Peninsula to the southern termination of the table-land at the Nilgiri mountains. The districts on the Deccan plateau are, along with the native state of Mysore, which occupies the southern end of the table-land, exposed to the same danger of famine as the upland districts of Bombay; and their tank system, largely developed as it is, fails to protect the crops in seasons of extreme drought. The eastern and southern districts of Madras lie under different climatic conditions from the rest of India, as they depend more for their rain on the north-east than on the south-west monsoon. They are protected by the artificial irrigation provided from the Godavari, Kistna, Kaveri, and other smaller rivers, and a multitude of tanks, and they have not been so frequently or severely ravaged by famine as the country on the inland plateau.

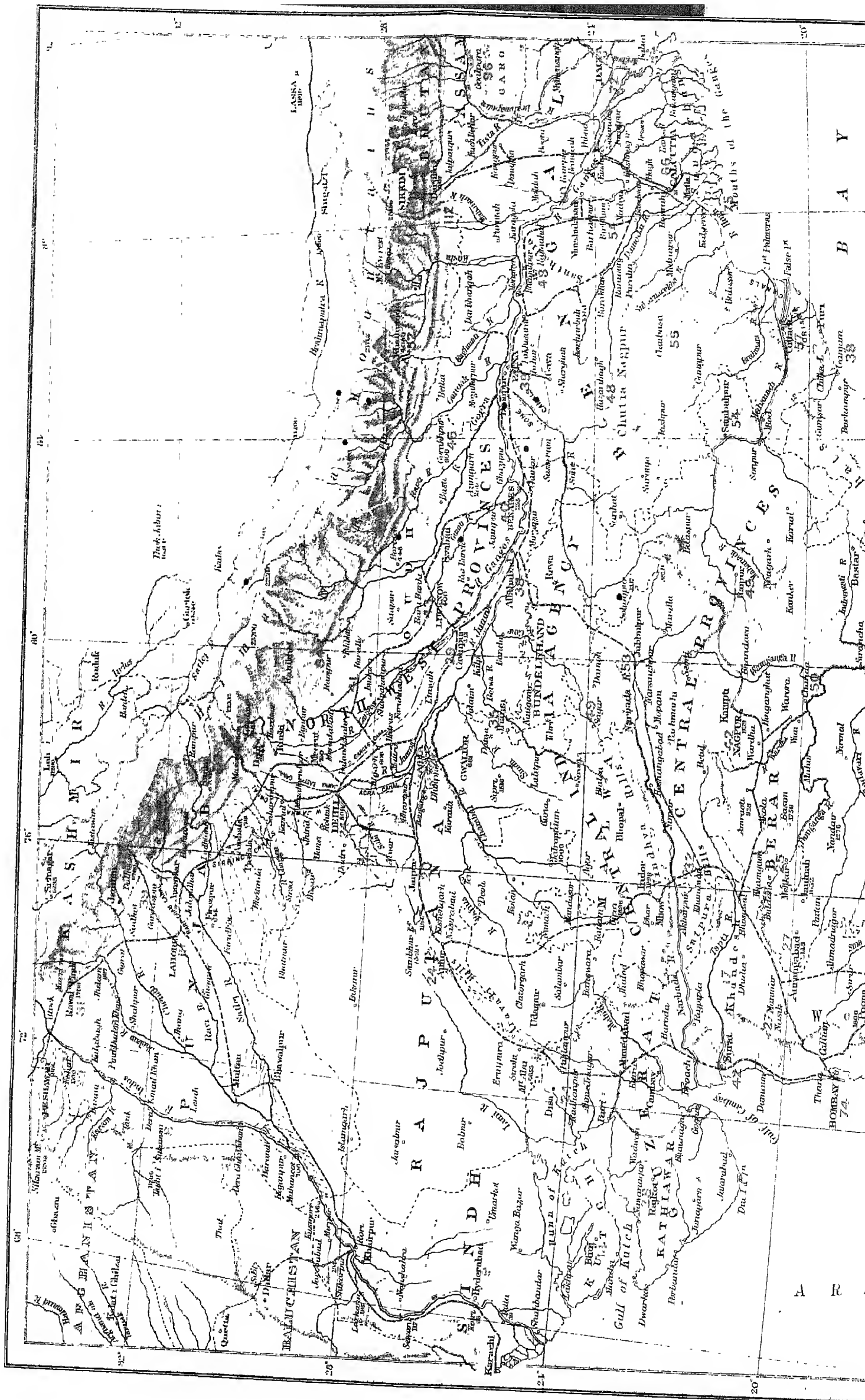
British Burmah. 30. British Burmah lies on the east coast of the Bay of Bengal, its richest districts being formed by the deltaic plains at the mouths of the Irawady and Salween rivers. This province is by its peculiar conditions of climate believed to be quite removed from danger of drought and consequent famine, and is specially deserving of our notice as supplying a source from which a large provision of food grain may always be secured for India.

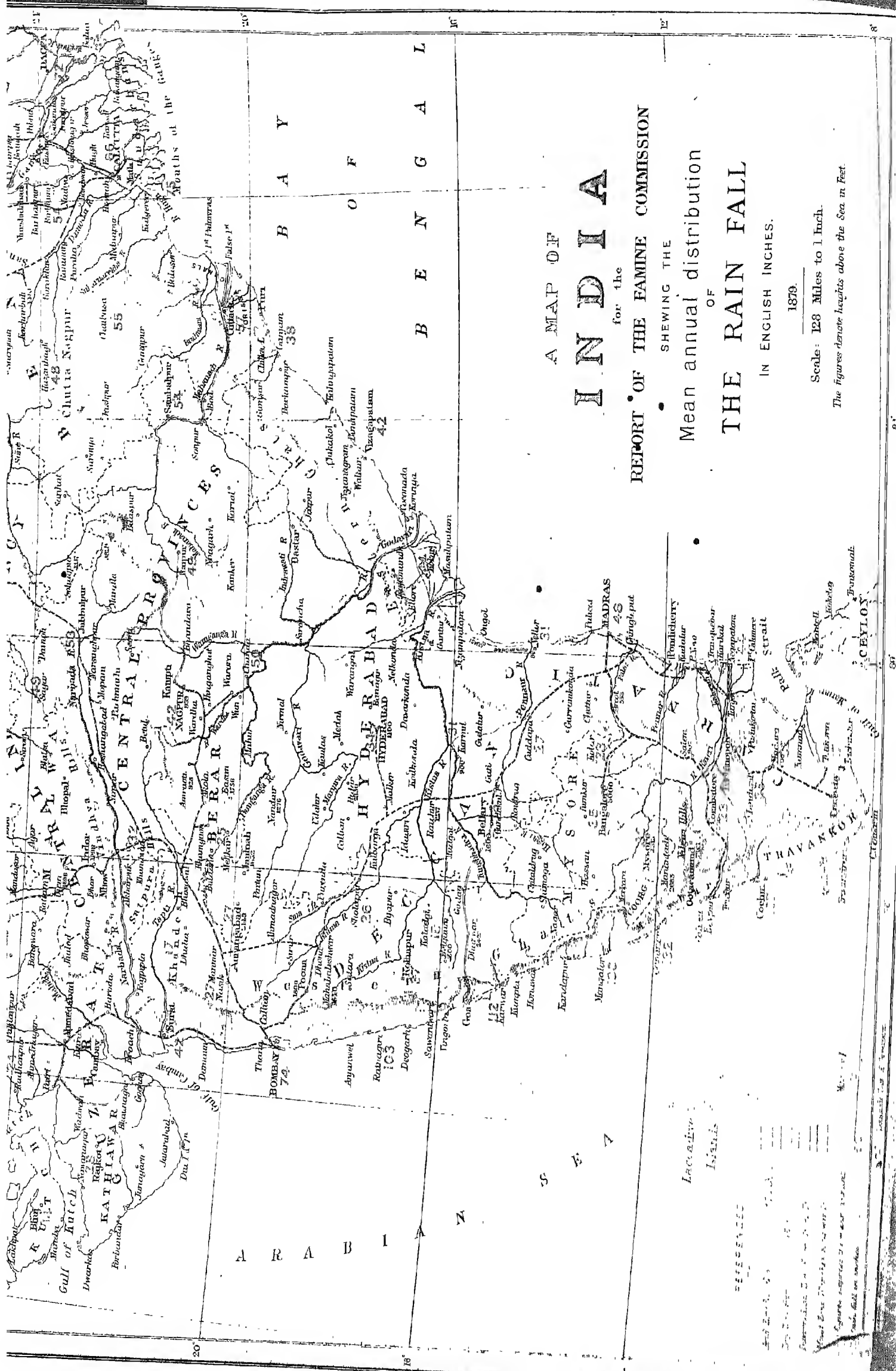
Population. 31. The 190 millions who compose the population of the British provinces, regarding which alone any trustworthy information can be given, may be classified roughly as follows according to their occupations:—

Agricultural	-	-	56 per cent. or 106 millions.
Traders	-	-	18 per cent. or 34 millions.
Labourers	-	-	16 per cent. or 30 millions.
Professional and Service	-	-	10 per cent. or 20 millions.
Total			- 190 millions.

The labourers, however, are mostly employed on the land, and many of the traders and artisans have small holdings, so that the numbers interested in agriculture are really much more numerous than the above figures would show. The population of the towns (including under this title towns with 5,000 inhabitants and upwards) is about 14 millions, of which  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions are collected in the 44 largest cities. The rural population is therefore 176 millions, and is distributed among 490,000 villages, having on an average 386 inhabitants each. The density of the population is, on the average of all British India, 211 to the square mile. The largest population in a rural district is about 800 to the square mile, but the numbers vary greatly in











different provinces and districts, and the following table will give a general idea of their distribution :—

Province.	Population of Rural Districts per square mile.		
	Average.	Greatest	Least.
Punjab - - -	173	532	51
North-Western Provinces -	378	659	109
Bengal - - -	397	778	92
Central Provinces - - -	97	177	45
Bombay - - -	131	501	90
Madras - - -	226	540	118

Of the rate of increase of the population little is known at present. The enumeration has nowhere been such as to be altogether free from doubt, and in only two provinces has more than one regular census been taken. In one of these, the North-Western Provinces, the rate of increase during the interval between the censuses appeared to be .52 per cent. per annum, and in the other, the Central Provinces, .33 per cent.

32. The devastating famines to which the provinces of India have from time to time been liable, are in all cases to be traced directly to the occurrence of seasons of unusual drought, the failure of the customary rain-fall leading to the failure of the food crops on which the subsistence of the population depends. It is desirable, therefore, before proceeding to the discussion of the matters which will constitute the substance of our Report, to indicate what is known as to the rain-fall of the different parts of the country and its variations from year to year, and what prospect there is of rendering such knowledge practically available for the purpose of meeting, or avoiding the consequences of extreme drought to which so many parts of India are subject.

All Indian  
famines  
caused by  
drought.

33. The fluctuations of the total rain-fall from year to year in all parts of the country are very considerable, variations of as much as 50 per cent. on either side of the average being often registered. An opinion has recently been put forward by persons qualified by their scientific knowledge to judge of such matters, that there is evidence of these fluctuations being in some measure synchronous with those periodical variations in the condition of the sun which are indicated by the varying extent or number of sun spots; and the recurring cycle of about 11 years, with which prolonged observation has shown that the period of sun-spot variation on the average accords, has been thus considered to correspond to the annual variations of the rain-fall, the maximum and minimum of the one approximating in period to those of the other.

Supposed  
periodicity of  
fluctuations  
in the rain-  
fall.

34. These views, however, cannot be said to be in any sufficient degree established, still less to be generally accepted by scientific authorities, or to be of present practical value. They have been contested on various grounds, such as that the evidence is directly opposed to them, that the data are insufficient to establish any such general conclusions, and that the maximum rain-fall in some cases coincides with the minimum sun-spot period and not with the maximum. On the whole it is not possible for us in the present state of knowledge to say more than that the subject is one deserving of careful investigation, and that it does not seem contrary to reasonable expectation that some relation should be established between the variations of the rain-fall from year to year and those of the conditions of the sun's surface, on the heat derived from which, unquestionably, all terrestrial meteorological phenomena closely depend. For various reasons India is a country, in which the investigation of this matter may be carried out with especial facilities, and for this reason (though other grounds are not wanting) we would urge that, as the expense of such researches would be small, the measures which have recently been taken by the Government of India to carry them out should be continued, and even extended in the future. Further information on the scientific aspect of this question will be found in the Appendix\* to our Report.

Want of  
sufficient  
evidence on  
the subject.

35. Although the existence of any true periodical or cyclical variation of the rain-fall is thus left open to doubt, the general phenomena of its distribution during the progress of the year, and over the different parts of the country, are sufficiently well established and understood. A strongly marked yearly periodicity is everywhere

\*App. No. I.

Distribution  
of the rain  
over the year.



observed, the chief fall occurring, with few exceptions, in the summer months, between May and October, in the season commonly known as the south-west monsoon. On a part of the Madras coast, on the east of the peninsula, heavy rain falls after the cessation of these summer rains, in the months of November and December, at the beginning of what is termed the season of the north-east monsoon. In the more northern provinces, again, a well-marked season of winter rain occurs, commencing about Christmas and extending to February, but its effects hardly reach south of the tropic, and it has no sensible influence on the agriculture of Southern India. The main agricultural operations of the country correspond with these principal seasons of rain, and their relative importance is in a great degree dependent on the local distribution of the rain-fall at the various seasons of the year, as the period and amount of rain differ much in the several provinces of India.

H. Extent of rain-fall in different parts of India.

Mau  
Myt

The three chief zones of rain-fall.

British  
Burma

Parts of the country secure from drought.

Populati

Parts of the country most subject to drought.

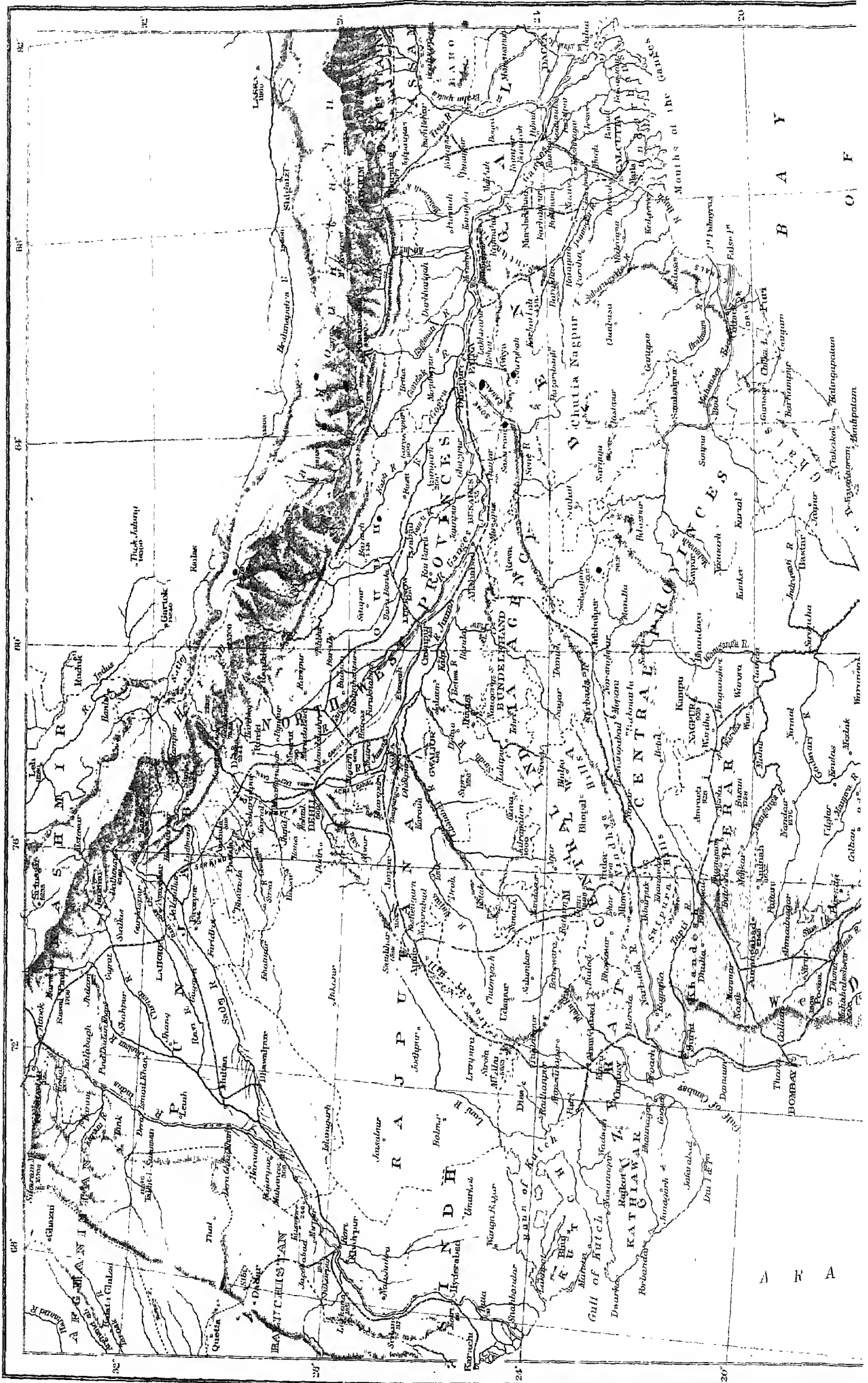
36. The annexed map shows the general features of the distribution of annual rain-fall. The fall on the Western Ghats and on the tract between them and the sea is very heavy, being from 70 to 100 inches at the sea level, and as much as 250 inches on the mountain face exposed to the south-west rain-bearing winds. Along the east coast of the Bay of Bengal, and in the eastern districts of the Bengal Province, as also along the foot and outer slopes of the Himalaya throughout its whole extent, the rain-fall is also extremely heavy, reaching 100 inches or more. Subject to these exceptions it may be said generally that the portion of India east of the 80th meridian has a rain-fall of more than 40 inches, while the portion west of the same meridian has less than 40 inches. The region in which the fall is less than 30 inches includes almost the whole of the Punjab, a considerable part of the North-West Provinces, a large part of Rajputana and Kathiawar, as well as almost the whole of the Deccan and Mysore. In Sindh and in the southern portion of the Punjab and most western part of Rajputana the rain-fall is extremely small and irregular, being less than 15 inches.

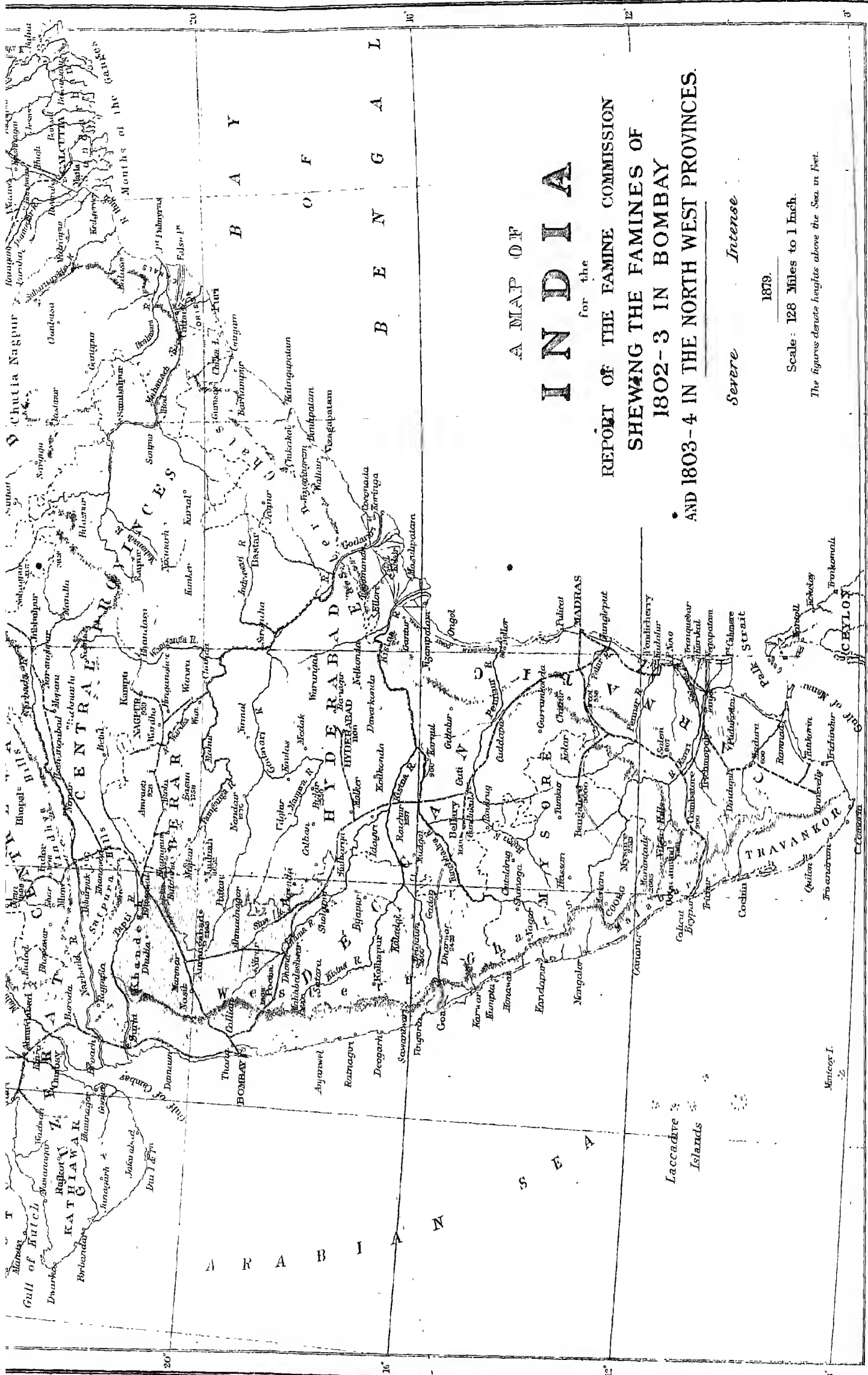
37. Of the area in which the rain-fall is below 15 inches it may be said that it is either actual desert, or that agriculture is impossible without artificial irrigation; and hence it has followed that where the rain is least copious the population has made itself in a great degree independent of the local rain-fall. In the opposite direction it is also generally true that where the rain is most abundant, exceeding 40 or 50 inches, the occurrence of such drought as will cause serious scarcity is rare. The region in which the average rain-fall is between 20 and 35 inches is that which suffers most from droughts. Here, though on the average of years the rain is sufficient to support an agricultural population, the greater deficiencies which reduce the quantity below what is essential, as well as the smaller which seriously damage the crops, are so frequent as to lead to repeated seasons of scarcity of greater or less severity.

38. The parts of the country which, from the abundance and certainty of their rain-fall, or from other conditions of climate or their geographical features, are exempt from the risk of drought and consequent famine are: (1) the eastern districts of Bengal and Assam, which enjoy so ample and regular a rain-fall and such abundant river inundation as to ensure the safety of the crops in the driest years; (2) Burmah, which, like Eastern Bengal, is never without a rain-fall or inundations more than sufficient for its luxuriant rice crops; (3) the narrow strip of country lying between the Western Ghats and the sea, and the tract immediately eastward of the summits of that range; (4) the upper valley of the Nerbada; (5) Sindh, in which, owing to the very small rain-fall, agriculture almost wholly depends on artificial irrigation from the Indus, the supply of water from which never so far fails as to cause a general loss of crop.

39. The tract which is most subject to drought includes (1) the western and southern parts of the North-Western Provinces and that portion of the Punjab territory which lies east of the Satlej; (2) the western and northern States of Rajputana and of the central plateau which border on the North-Western Provinces; (3) the districts of Bombay above the Western Ghats, and the districts of Madras above the Eastern Ghats, together with the southern and western region of Hyderabad and all Mysore, except the strip lying close along the Western Ghats; (4) the districts of Madras along the east coast and at the extremity of the peninsula. The more detailed account of the known droughts of the past hundred years, which we shall give, will show how frequently the region whose total rain-fall is from 20 to 35 inches has been subject to severe scarcity, and that within it have occurred the great famines of 1837-38 in the North-West Provinces, of 1868-69 in Rajputana, and of 1876-77 over nearly the whole of the peninsula of Southern India. These droughts were mainly due to the failure of the south-west monsoon. The drought of 1865-66, and some of the earlier scarcities in Madras, arose from failures of the rain of the north-east monsoon on the







**A MAP OF**  
**INDIA**  
for the  
**REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION**  
**SHOWING THE FAMINES OF**  
**1802-3 IN BOMBAY**  
**AND 1803-4 IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCES.**

Severe Intense

1879.

Scale: 128 Miles to 1 Inch.

The figures denote heights above the Sea in Feet.



east coast, a failure which in 1865-66 extended into Western Bengal. The famine of 1873-74 in Northern Bengal was exceptional, and is an instance of a great scarcity suddenly arising in a region of abundant average rain-fall. This drought arose from a premature cessation of the rain, apparently due to an abnormal extension to the eastward of the margin of the comparatively dry area of North-Western India.

40. As at present no power exists of foreseeing the atmospheric changes effective in producing the rain-fall, or of determining beforehand its probable amount in any season, such as would admit of timely precautions being taken against impending drought, the necessity becomes the greater for watching with close attention the daily progress of each season as it passes, for ascertaining with accuracy and promptitude the actual quantity of rain in all parts of the country, and for forming the best and earliest judgment possible from the facts as they occur, whether the supply will be sufficient or otherwise. For the present at least, so far as the rain-fall directly affects the subject under consideration, these are the only precautions that appear possible. Within the last few years a very satisfactory system of meteorological observations has been established all over British India, and in our opinion it is of primary importance that it shall be maintained in complete efficiency, and shall so far be strengthened and improved as to ensure the early and punctual supply of information to the executive governments, and to the officials in all departments concerned with the agriculture of the country or the preparations required to meet famines, as to the actual progress of the periodical seasons of rain in all parts of the provinces for which those governments or officers are respectively responsible. So far as it may become possible, with the advance of knowledge, to form a forecast of the future, such aids should be made use of, though with due caution.

Importance of the extension of meteorological knowledge among officials,

41. We are also satisfied of the importance of the diffusion of more sound and accurate knowledge of the causes and mode of occurrence of the periodical rains, on which the well-being of India is so largely dependent, not only among the officers of the Government, but also among all classes of the community. Any measures which the Government may find possible with a view to the publication and diffusion of such knowledge cannot fail to be highly beneficial.

and among all classes in India.

#### FAMINE RELIEF.

History of past famines, their general characteristics and consequences.—Review of former measures of relief.—General considerations affecting the administration of State relief.—Practical recommendations.—Systematised action and adoption of a code.—Improved statistics.—Creation of an Agricultural Department.—Employment of the able-bodied.—Gratuitous relief.—Village inspection.—Government action in respect to food-supply.—Suspension of land revenue and loans to the landed classes.—Local responsibility for the cost of famine relief.—Miscellaneous suggestions.

42. Regarding the famines that occurred before the British occupation of India not enough is known to enable us even to make out a correct list of the years or the causes of these visitations. Some of those of which we find mention were due to war rather than to drought; in all probability some have been altogether forgotten, since the object of Indian historians was generally rather to record the fortunes of a dynasty than the condition of a people. Even regarding those famines which took place at the end of the last century in territories administered by British officers, the information is too scanty for us now to define the area or the degree of the calamity. The famine of 1770 in Lower Bengal and Behar was extremely severe, and it was officially estimated at the time that a third of the population (or say 10 millions) had died. In 1784 another famine which visited Upper India was probably even more acute, and certainly covered a larger area than that of 1770; but the country was not at that time under British jurisdiction, and very little is known of the facts of the case. In Madras 1781 and 1782 were years of severe scarcity, caused mainly by the devastation of the war with Hyder Ali, but partly also by drought. In 1791 a severe drought afflicted the northern districts of the same Presidency as well as Hyderabad and the southern districts of Bombay, and in 1792 the famine there was intense. It was on this occasion that relief-works were first opened by the Madras Government for the support of the famine-stricken.

Famines of the last century.

43. In 1802 there was a failure of rain, severe in the Bombay Presidency and in Hyderabad, partial in the northern districts of Madras; this was followed next year by famine in the former case and by scarcity in the latter. In the same year (1803) a similar failure, but more decided, occurred in the North-Western Provinces, which led to a very serious and widely extended famine in 1804. In Bombay the effects of the drought were greatly enhanced by the ravages of the army of Jaswant Rao Holkar

Famine of 1802-4.

and the Pindaris in his train. Grain was imported by the Government into Bombay and sold at a fixed price to the public, exportation being prohibited; and public works and hospitals were started for the relief of those who flocked into the towns of Bombay and Surat. In the North-Western Provinces the tract severely afflicted was the country ceded by the Nawab of Oudh in 1801, and known as the Ceded Province, with a population of about 10 millions of people. It comprised the central part of the present North-Western Provinces. The measures taken by the Government of the time to relieve the distress consisted in making large remissions of the revenue, in giving loans and advances to the landowners, and in offering a bounty on all grain imported into Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, or Fatehgarh.

Famine of  
1807 in  
Madras.

44. In 1806 there was a widespread failure of rain in the Madras Presidency, especially in the tract known as the Carnatic (which includes the more southern districts lying along the east coast of that Presidency), and in the parts around Madras, though the northern or Deccan districts were less heavily visited; and during the winter of 1806 and the early part of 1807 the distress caused by this drought grew to be very severe. This was the first occasion on which we have distinct evidence of a fact which, as shown by later and more accurate observation, has characterised all subsequent famines in India. Large crowds of emaciated people flocked into the town of Madras, attracted thither by the existence of a charitable association, and by the hope of obtaining gratuitous help without limit. There was a good deal of discussion as to the proper measures to be taken, some authorities advocating the opening of works to give employment to the people close to their homes, others advocating the importation of grain by Government into the interior; but the mortality among the cattle prevented this being done. The Government at the outset declared against any interference with private trade, but in the end they conceived it necessary to purchase, guaranteeing a minimum price to importers; when the famine came to an end through the plentiful rain-fall of 1807, large stocks were left on hand, and had to be disposed of at a loss.

Famines of  
1812-13 and  
1824-5 in  
Bombay and  
Madras.

45. The principle of non-interference with trade declared by Madras was followed by the Government of Bombay in 1812-13 when another drought occurred, entailing famine in Guzerat and the adjoining countries. On this occasion the Governor refused to sanction the prohibition of export, or to import grain on Government account, declaring his belief that unassisted trade, if left to itself, could do more to relieve distress and to effect an equable distribution of supply than Government could do with all its resources. The famine extended to Rajputana, where it is reported to have been very severe, and to the trans-Jumna districts of the North-Western Provinces. In a subsequent scarcity of 1824-5, which, though not very acute, extended over nearly the whole of Bombay and the north part of the Madras Presidency, the same question arose again. Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was then Governor of Bombay, at first inclined to the policy of offering a bounty on imported grain, or guaranteeing a fixed minimum price to importers; but after some discussion he became convinced that it was wiser to adhere to the general principle of non-interference. In Madras the Government similarly proclaimed their intention of not interfering directly with trade, but offered a bounty on all grain imported from a distance to the distressed locality. On this occasion the drought visited Madras in 1823, Bombay in 1824, and the North-Western Provinces in 1825.

Famine of  
1833 in  
Madras.

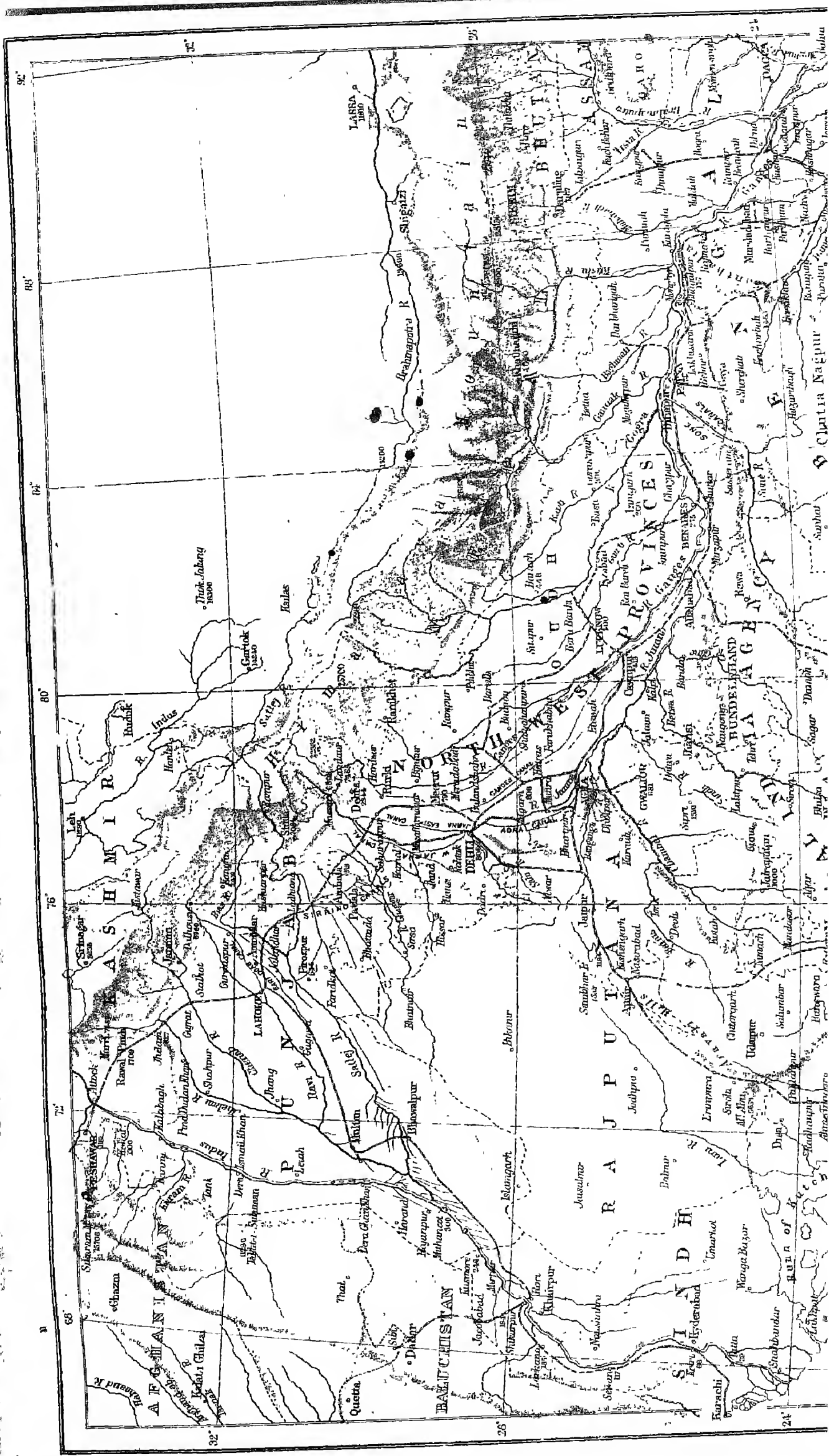
46. The Madras Presidency was the seat of the next great famine—that of 1833, though on this occasion the northern districts suffered most, and especially the Gantur district, in which the mortality was so terrible that this was known as the Gantur famine. The total population severely affected was about five millions, and the area about 38,000 square miles. On this occasion the Government appears to have been taken by surprise, and the severity of the calamity was not recognised till too late. Very little was done to relieve distress except by the distribution of gratuitous food in the towns to which the sufferers, from starvation flocked. It was estimated that 200,000 persons died in Gantur out of a population of 500,000, and it was many years before the falling-off of the land revenue due to this loss of life was effaced. The adjacent parts of Bombay (that is, the Southern Mahratta country), of Mysore and Hyderabad, also shared in the calamity, though to a less degree. The drought of 1832 in the South was followed by drought in Upper India in 1833, which produced scarcity, but not famine, in the North-Western Provinces.

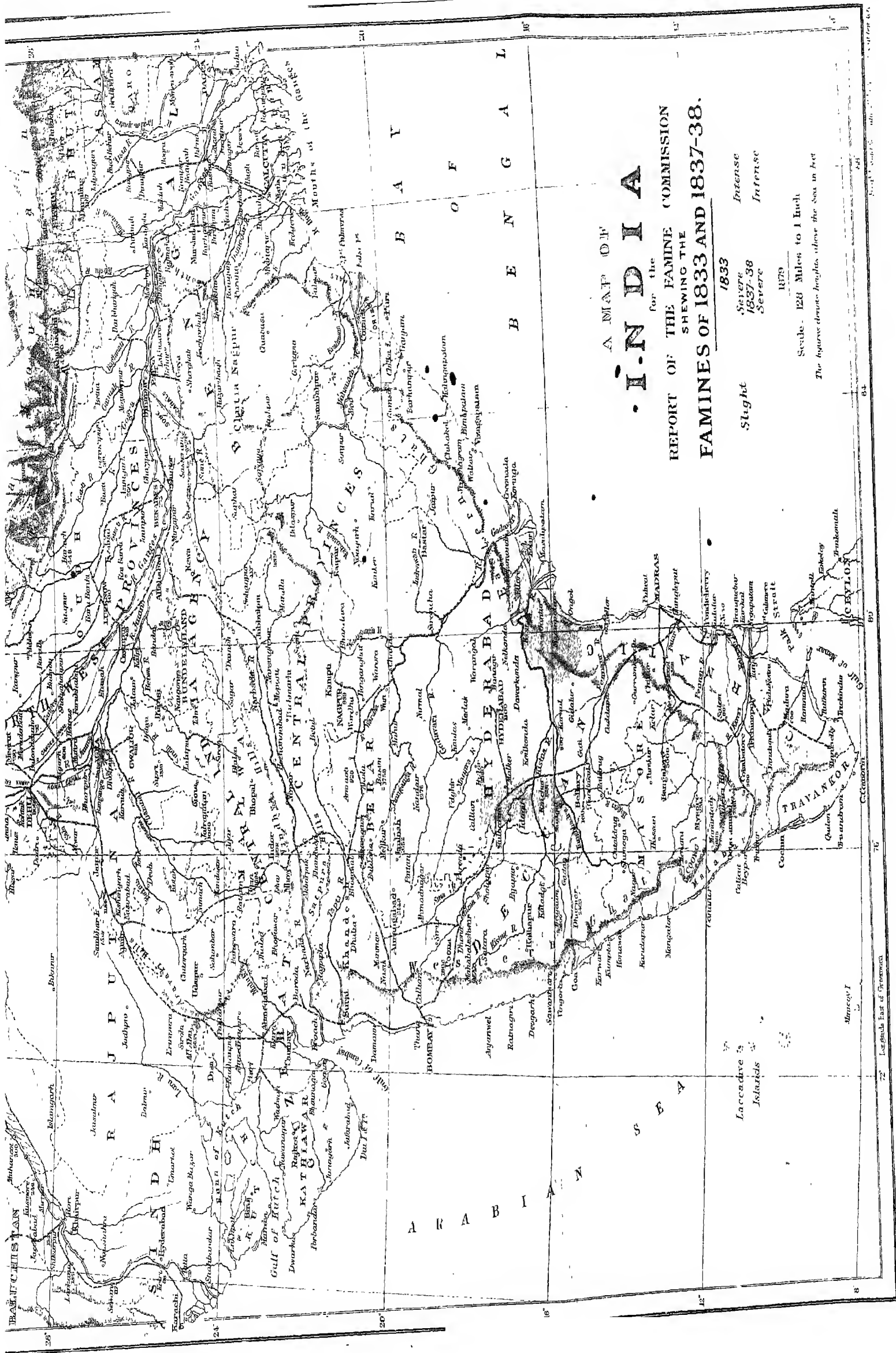
Famine of  
83, 7-8,  
North-

47. The year 1837 witnessed the first very severe famine of the century in Upper India. It affected the whole country between Allahabad and Delhi, being most severe between Cawnpore and Agra, and it was also felt in the adjoining Native







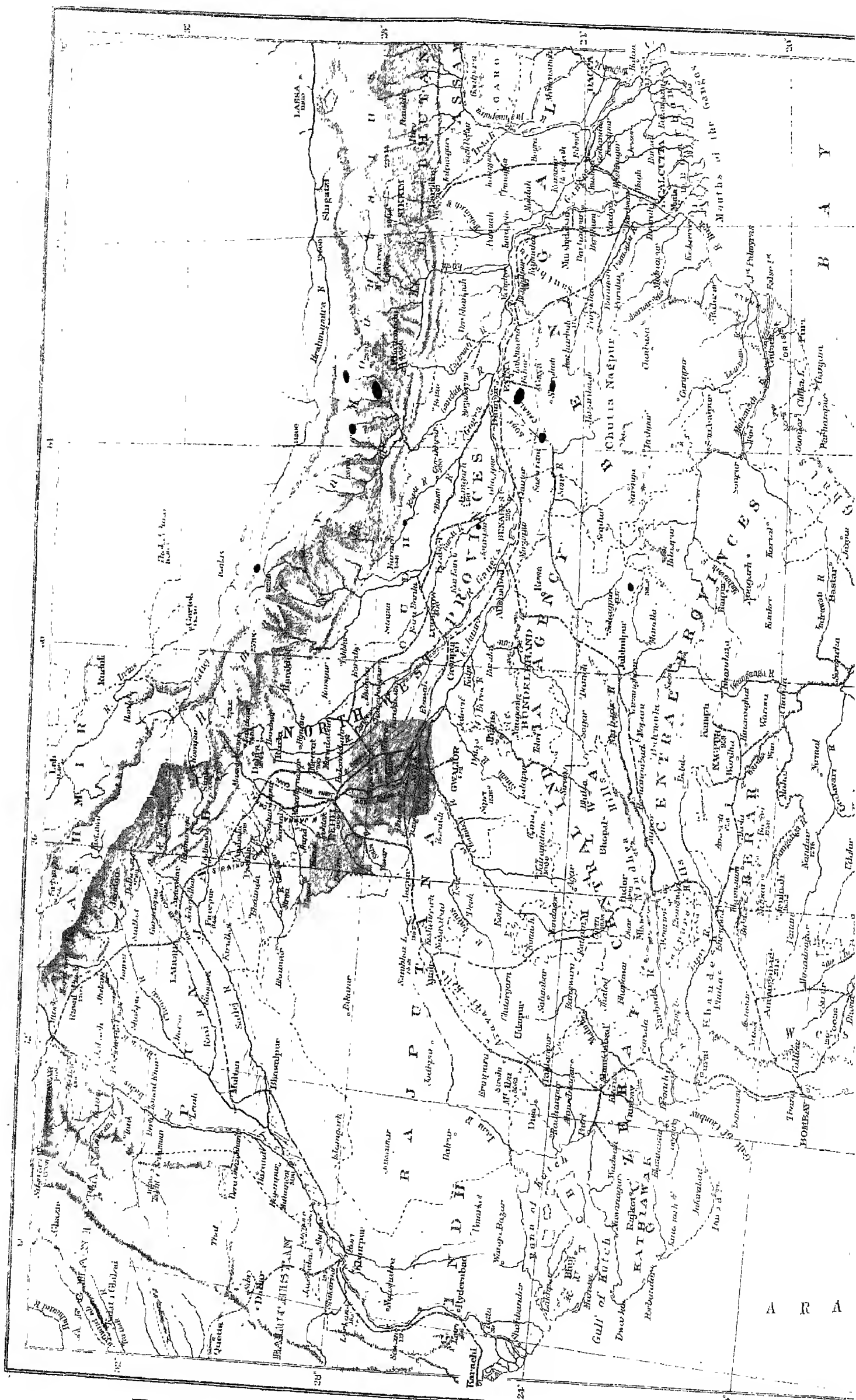


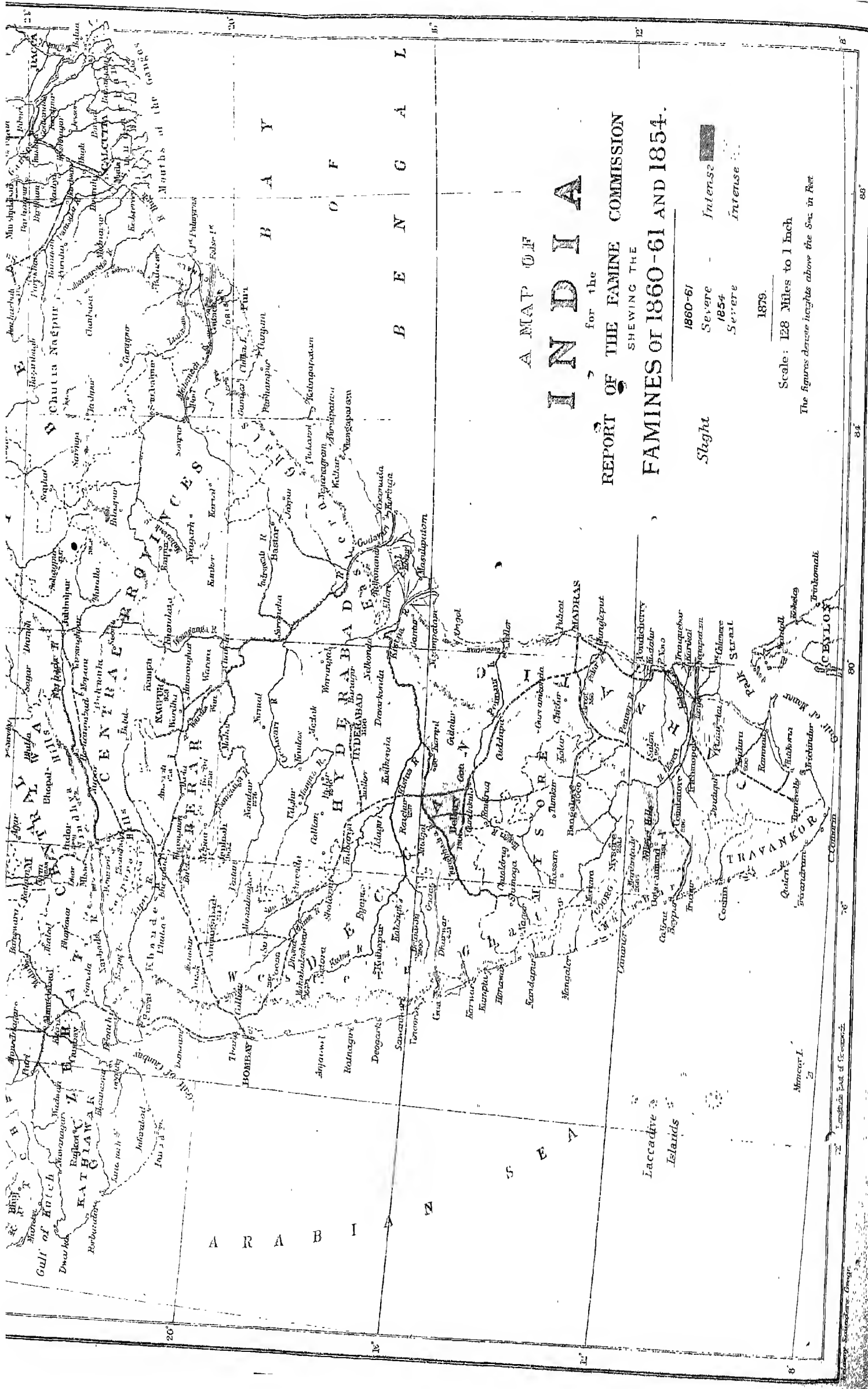
**A MAP OF INDIA**  
for the  
**REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION**  
SHOWING THE  
**FAMINES OF 1833 AND 1837-38.**

**1833**  
Slight  
Intense

**1837-38**  
Slight  
Intense

Scale. 128 Miles to 1 Inch  
The figure denotes heights above the sea in feet





A MAP OF  
**INDIA**  
for the  
REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION  
SHEWING THE  
FAMINES OF 1860-61 AND 1854.

*Slight* *Severe* *Intense*  
1860-61  
1879

Scale: 128 Miles to 1 Inch

The figures denote heights above the Sea in Feet





States of Rajputana as far west as Jaipur. The area of the famine was about 113,000 square miles, 56,000 of which were in British territory, and the population affected about 28,000,000. The cause of the famine was the almost total failure of the rains of 1836, following after some irregular, though not exceptionally bad, years. The agricultural statistics at this period were very deficient; but the Government early took alarm, and set itself to consider seriously the principles on which relief measures should be administered. The views then adopted were that the main duty of Government was to offer employment to those who could work, but that the relief of the helpless and infirm members of the population was the business of the charitable public. Wherever there was a large demand for employment public works were to be opened at very low rates of pay, but without limit of expenditure; at the same time relief committees were formed, and subscriptions called for to feed those who were unable to work. Where the pressure on these charitable funds was exceptionally great, some assistance was given from the treasury, but not as a matter of right. Remissions and suspensions of revenue were freely granted, the remissions amounting to about Rs. 95,00,000, or nearly half the land revenue demand in the affected tract. But loans and advances were discouraged except for the purposes of permanent improvements or for seed grain, as it was held that they led the people to rely too little on themselves. There was immigration from the Native States, especially to Agra; but it was more than counterpoised by the extensive emigration to Central India. Violent agrarian disturbances and robberies of grain carts and grain stores were so rife that the troops had in several cases to be called out. The statistics of the various measures of relief are very incomplete; but it appears probable that about 100,000 people were employed on relief works for several months at a total cost of about Rs. 20,00,000, and that on charitable relief about Rs. 3,50,000 were spent. The rains of 1838, though so late in coming as to cause renewed anxiety, were abundant when they came, and distress ended with the harvesting of the autumn crop. Prices during this scarcity rose to about three times their ordinary rate, but they seldom stood higher than 20 lbs. of ordinary grain per rupee. They did not, as a rule, reach a height which we should now consider as indicating extreme tension, which may be put at about 16 lbs. or less per rupee. Nothing is known with exactness as to the mortality due to the famine. It was calculated by Colonel Baird Smith, long after, at about 800,000; but this is probably much under the mark. The extremity of suffering endured by the population was such as to leave behind a widespread and lasting recollection of the horrors of the famine; and it was some years before its effects ceased to be legible in the lessened figures of the land revenue.

48. In 1854 a famine, severe, though limited in area, visited the northern part of the Madras Presidency; but its intensity was confined to the Bellary district, and the south part of Hyderabad, an area of about 30,000 square miles, with a population of about three millions. The rain-fall of 1852 had been light, and that of 1853 was extremely deficient. The harvest was reckoned at only half an average crop. Relief was administered only by means of public works; but abundant employment was thus given—so much so that crowds of applicants flocked in from the Nizam's dominions, and for about nine months more than 50,000 people obtained relief on these works. The supervision was at first exercised by civil officers, and was very lax; but by degrees it was brought under the charge of an engineer, with special officers under him, and the discipline and out-turn of work improved, while the wage, which had been fixed too high, was cut down to a minimum rate. The total expenditure on the works was about Rs. 12,28,000. When the famine was closed by a plentiful rain-fall in the autumn of 1854 followed by a fair harvest, a valuation was made of the work done, and it was found to be worth about 38 per cent. of the money expended on it. The loss of land revenue and other income amounted to 42 lakhs of rupees, including the decrease in the receipts during the next two years, which was due chiefly to the loss of cattle and the consequent inability of the people to plough the land. It was estimated that in the worst part of Bellary four-fifths of the village cattle had died. Nothing definite is known as to the mortality among the inhabitants; but a census taken in 1856-7, in the imperfect form in use at the time, seemed to show that the usual rate of the growth of the population had received a serious check.

49. From the close of the famine of 1837-38, the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab entered on a period of good seasons and of agricultural prosperity until the Mutiny of 1857. In that time of disturbance much property was destroyed and much land remained untilled. The seasons of 1858 and 1859 were irregular and unfavourable; and in 1860 the monsoon was so extremely deficient that the autumn harvest was to a great extent lost, and the ground was too hard and dry to sow the

winter crops. The winter rains also were entirely wanting. Although the absolute failure of the crops was believed to have been as complete as in 1837, the area of this drought was very limited. It was intense only in the country between Agra and Delhi, inhabited by about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions of people; and its entire range extended in British territory to 19 millions of people and an area of 48,000 square miles. Some of the adjoining Native States also suffered, especially Alwar; but on the whole the area of distress was surrounded to a remarkable extent by countries enjoying much prosperity; for the crops in Bengal, Benares, Oudh, and the west part of the Punjab were fully up to, and in some cases above, the average. Whether from this cause, or, as it was held at the time, from the increased material prosperity of the country, the sufferings from the famine were far less than those of 1837-38. One result of the smallness of the famine area was an active emigration from the drought-stricken tract, in which it was estimated that half a million people took part. The Government early began to take steps to meet the expected distress. The principles of relief were the same as had been adopted in 1837, viz., that the duty of the State is to provide employment for those who can work, and of the public to support by charitable assistance those who cannot. But both these principles were carried out in a more provident and thorough manner than before. Ten large relief-works, selected as being of permanent utility, were opened, under the supervision of professional officers; the labourers were not paid by the piece, but at a low rate of daily wages, a fixed task of work being demanded in return. Besides these, minor works were opened to provide for the employment of people unable to travel far from their homes, the wages in such cases being given not in cash but in cooked food. Altogether about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs of rupees were expended, and about 35,000 persons employed daily for a period of ten months on these works. Gratuitous relief was mainly carried on at the expense of the charitable public, aided by contributions from other parts of India and from England; it was generally distributed in the form of cooked food to persons who submitted to the condition of residence in an enclosed poor-house. This system was first introduced in Moradabad by Sir John Strachey, who was at that time Collector; it was generally adopted throughout the North-Western Provinces, and was believed by those who administered the relief measures to be not unpopular among the people relieved, the opinions of the native members of relief committees being, according to Colonel Baird Smith, unanimous in favour of it. In some cases applicants were admitted to relief on personal inquiries made by competent committees, but relief at their homes was as a rule only given to those women of respectable position by whom appearance in public would be felt as an intolerable degradation. About 80,000 persons were relieved daily for nine months, by these means, at the cost of about 14 lakhs of rupees. The distress was ended in November 1861 by the autumn harvest, which was a good one. This was the first occasion on which a famine formed the subject of a special inquiry; for during its progress Colonel Baird Smith was deputed to examine into and report on the causes, area, and intensity of the famine, the economic facts it disclosed, and the best measures to be adopted for its relief.

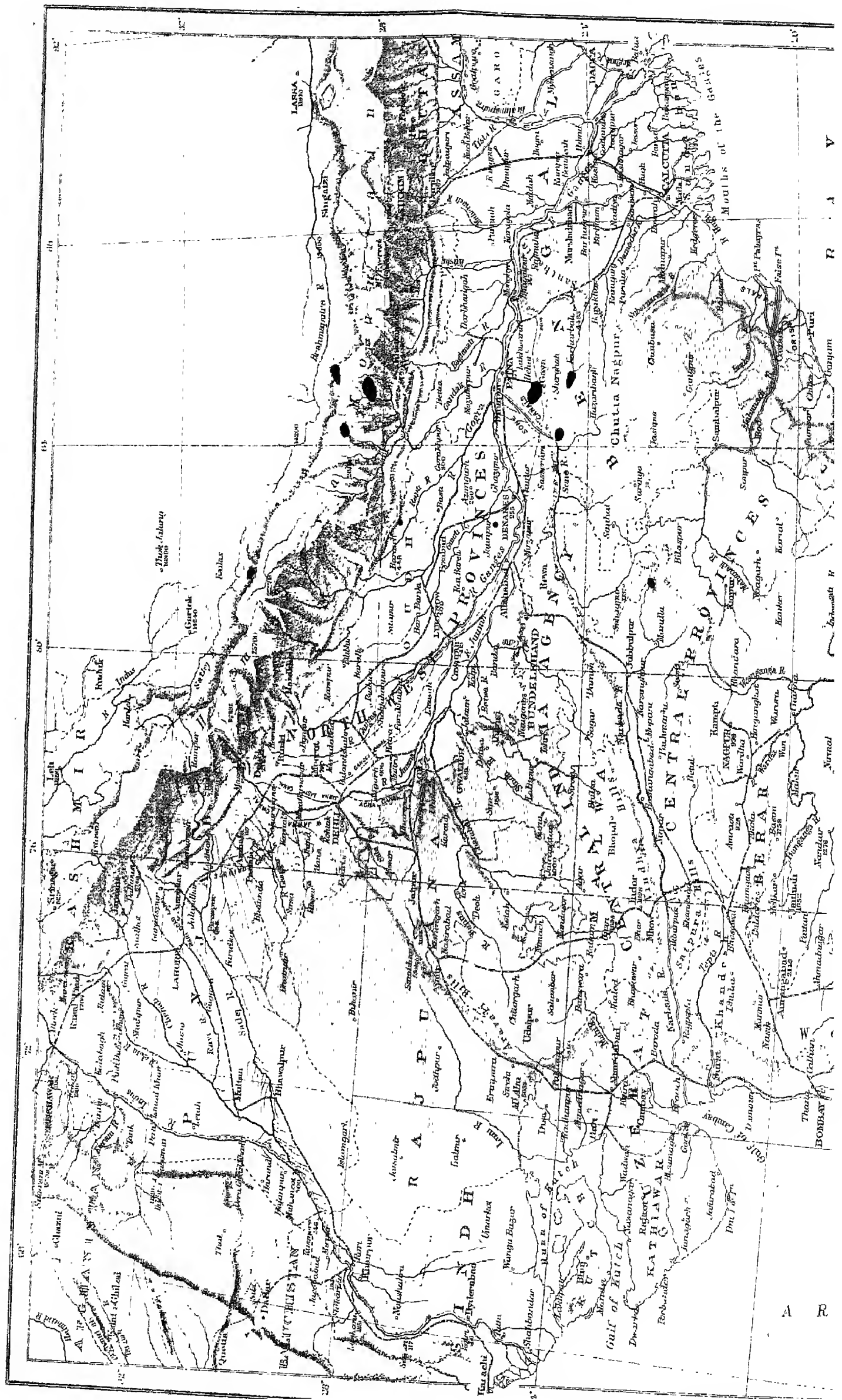
Famine of  
1866-67,  
Madras.

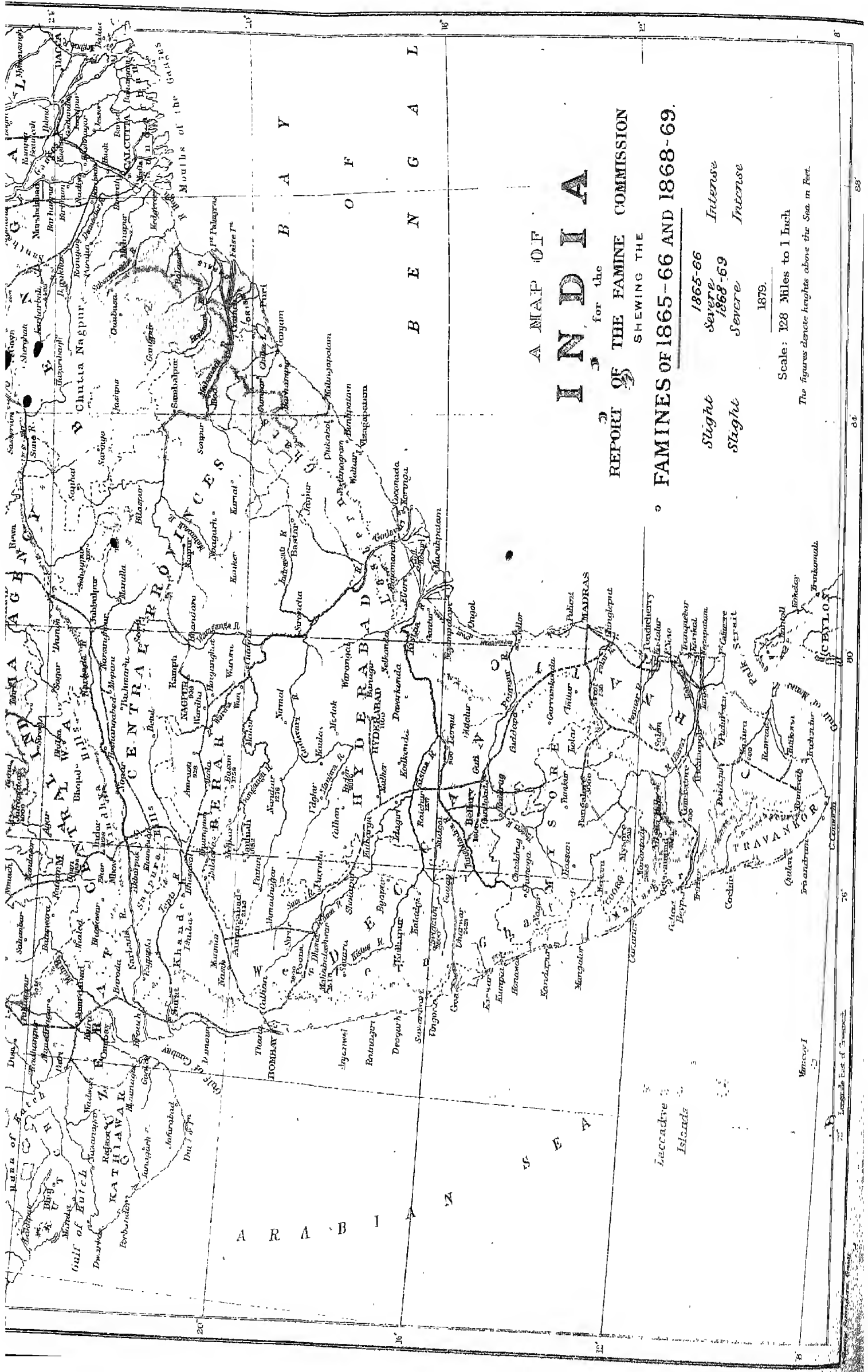
50. The drought of 1865 was felt along the whole eastern coast of India from Madras upwards; and it extended to some distance inland, visiting Mysore, the districts of Madras above the Eastern Ghats, Hyderabad, the hill country in the south-west of Bengal, and Behar; but it was most intense along the coast in the districts of Ganjam and Orissa. The area severely affected in Madras was about 43,000 square miles, with a population of about six millions. The Madras Government and its officers had now become familiar with the warnings of famine and the steps necessary to meet it, and were prepared to start the usual machinery of relief-works, relief-houses, and public subscriptions. But the distress was not at all pronounced, and in all probability would have passed off with little notice had not the rain-fall of the following year also, 1866, been so late as to cause general alarm and excitement, and so insufficient as to produce a very inferior crop. It was not till June or July that the need of relief became pressing, and works were then opened in considerable numbers, under civil officers. Prices rose to an extraordinary height, 10 and 12 lbs. per rupee for rice being not uncommon, while coarse millets sold at 12 to 15 lbs. per rupee; and the sufferings of the people in Ganjam and Bellary were severe. Still, in spite of unusually high wages and the absence of task-work, the numbers employed on relief-works never were large and averaged only 12,000 daily for 16 months. Gratuitous relief was given to 31,000 persons daily for 16 months, mainly in the form of cooked food and in relief-houses, managed to a large extent on the system introduced by Sir John Strachey and made

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A MAP OF  
**INDIA** for the  
REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION  
SHEWING THE  
FAMINES OF 1865-66 AND 1868-69.

<i>Slight</i>	<i>Severe</i>	<i>Intense</i>
<i>Slight</i>	<i>Severe</i>	<i>Intense</i>
		1879.

Scale: 128 Miles to 1 Inch  
The figures denote heights above the Sea in Feet.



known by Colonel Baird Smith's report. In Ganjam alone was there evinced any extreme dislike to this form of relief, and there only by the ryots and more respectable classes, to whom uncooked food was accordingly given. The prolongation of distress, due to the second failure of rain, caused the relief operations to last on till the next monsoon set in, in June 1867; the entire expenditure amounted to about 12 lakhs of rupees, of which two were contributed by the public and the rest fell on the Government. Not much is known as to the mortality; but the prolonged duration of high prices must have told severely on the population; and there are indications that the number of deaths in the last six months of 1866 increased by about 450,000, or was double the usual average.

51. This drought fell with far greater intensity on Orissa in Bengal, where, as no such calamity had occurred in the whole province for nearly a century, it had to be dealt with by a body of officials necessarily ignorant of the signs of its approach, unprepared to expect it, and inexperienced in the administration of relief measures; nor were the native inhabitants of Orissa in any respect more aware of what was coming on them than the British officers. The area most affected was about 12,000 square miles, with a population of about four millions. The rain-fall of 1865 was scanty and ceased prematurely, so that the out-turn of the great crop of winter rice, on which the country mainly depends, was reckoned at less than a third of the average crop. Food stocks were low, both because export had been unusually brisk of late, and because the people had not been taught by precarious seasons to protect themselves by retaining sufficient stores at home. When the harvest failed, so totally new to them was the situation that no one realised its meaning and its probable results. The Local Government and officials not taking alarm and misconceiving the gravity of the occasion abstained from making special inquiries; prices long remained so moderate that they offered no temptation to importers, and forced no reduction in consumption on the inhabitants, till suddenly the province was found to be almost bare of food. It was only in May 1866 that it was discovered that the markets were so empty that the jail prisoners and the Government establishments could not be supplied. But the southern monsoon had now begun and importation by sea or land became nearly impossible. Orissa was at that time almost isolated from the rest of India; the only road, leading to Calcutta across a country intersected by large rivers and liable to inundation, was unmetalled and unbridged, and there was very little communication by sea, for what trade there was had hitherto been a purely export trade, carried on in the months of fine weather. No relief could be obtained from the south, where lay the district of Ganjam, itself severely distressed. By great exertions and at enormous cost the Government threw in about 10,000 tons of food grain by the end of November, and this was given away gratuitously, or sold at low rates, or distributed in wages to the starving population, saving no doubt many thousands of lives. But meanwhile the mortality among those whom this relief did not reach, or reached too late, had been very great; and it was estimated that about a third of the population, or nearly a million persons, had died. Nor did the troubles of Orissa cease with 1866. The rain-fall of the year was so heavy as to cause great floods in the River Mahanadi; and while the harvests in all the higher lands were excellent, in all the low lands the inundations drowned the crop. In the ensuing year, 1867, after a brief respite during which hopes were entertained, which were not to be realised, that the distress had come to a close, the work of relief had to be taken up again. Then, as an apparent result of the reaction following the want of foresight and activity in affording help in the preceding year, the relief operations were marked by a profusion and absence of check hitherto unexampled. Altogether about 40,000 tons of rice were imported, of which even the lavish use made of it could not dispose of half; and, while it cost four times the usual price, the residue had to be sold for almost nothing when the monsoon of 1867, followed by an unusually fine harvest, had altogether put an end to the famine in 1868. The total amount of money expended in Orissa was about Rs. 1,45,00,000, so that in this famine the relief seemed to have been at once less efficient and more costly than that given on any previous occasion.

52. The drought of 1865 was not confined to Orissa, but extended also to Behar and Northern Bengal, where, for a time, in 1866, there was great suffering; relief-works were opened, and the gratuitous distribution of food, mostly in raw grain, was undertaken. But the system of relief was defective and devoid of uniform organization; the wages given on the work, and the amount of food at relief-centres, differed in every district, and the food was seldom given in sufficient quantities for sustenance. About 12,000 persons were employed on relief-works, and about 25,000 received gratuitous

food daily, for the four bad months, June to September. By that time the early autumn crop, which was unusually abundant, was harvested, and famine was at an end. The total expenditure on both the forms of relief was Rs. 2,30,000. There are no records of the mortality among the general population; but the police reported that about 135,000 persons died of starvation and of diseases arising from it.

Famine of  
1868-69.

53. Only a year after the abundant monsoon of 1867 put an end to the distress which had prevailed so long in the eastern half of India, the rains failed again over the greater part of Western and North-Western India, and the drought was followed by one of the most widespread and grievous famines on record. The seat of its greatest intensity was in the Native States of Marwar and Bikanir and in Ajmir. It was extremely severe in most of the other Native States of Rajputana and Central India as far east as Rewah, in the Jhansi division of the North-Western Provinces, in a small tract on the northern edge of the Central Provinces, and in the Hissar division of the Punjab; and it visited, though with less virulence, large tracts in the Central Provinces, the whole western half of the North-Western Provinces, the eastern region of the Punjab north of Hissar as far as the Sutlej, and the Guzerat province and north Deccan districts of Bombay. Altogether the area affected by this famine was about 300,000 square miles, and the population of that area was about 45 millions.

Rajputana  
and Central  
India.

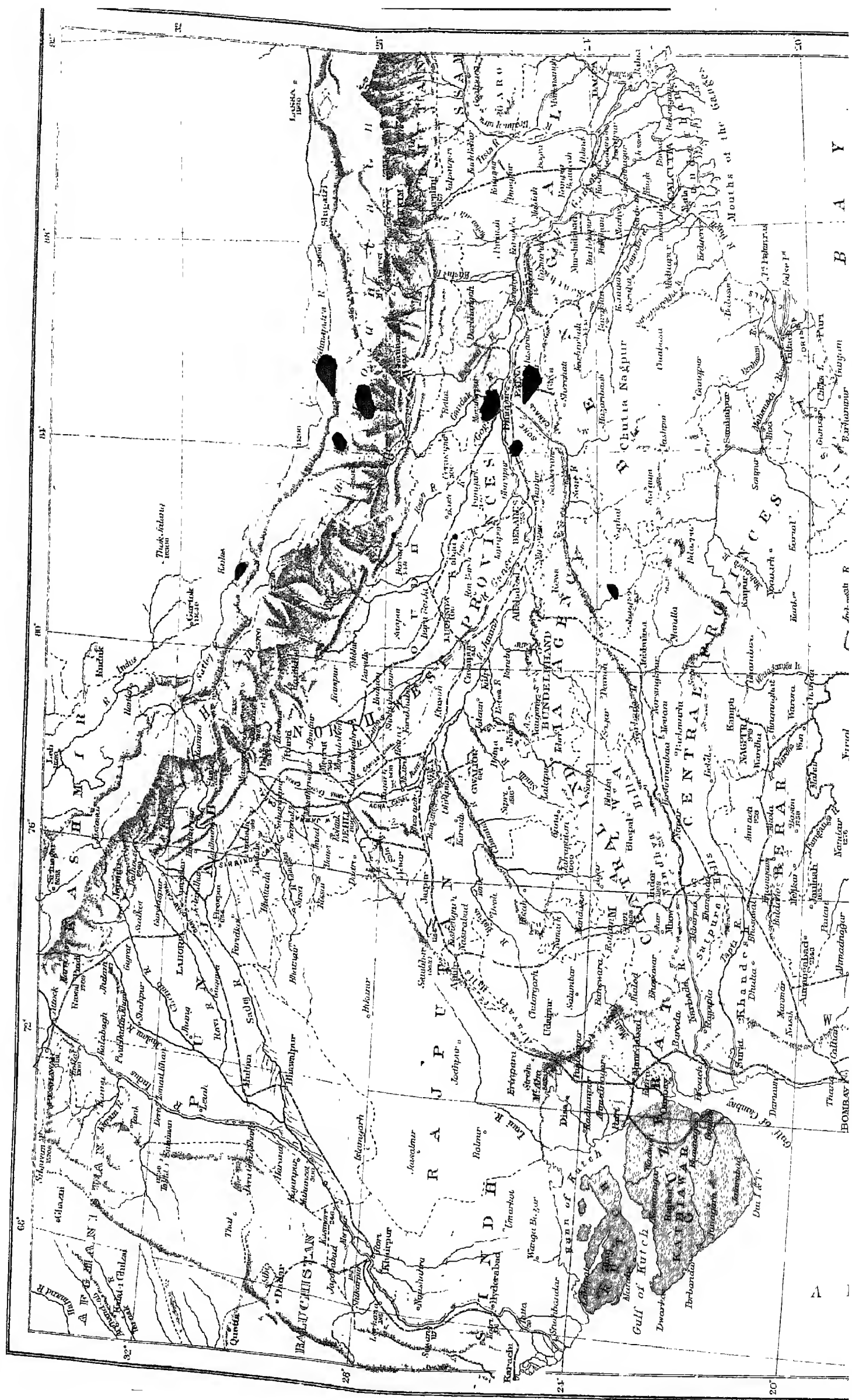
54. In Rajputana the rains failed so completely that the autumn crop (the chief harvest in those parts) was almost entirely lost, and, what was worse, there was an utter dearth of grass for pasture or fodder, and in some parts of water; so that it was impossible for the cultivators to feed their cattle, or for traders to import grain on bullocks or carts or by any other means than camels. Thus the communications of Rajputana with the adjoining country were as much cut off as those of Orissa in 1866. The only resource open to the people of the Native States was emigration, and they emigrated in enormous numbers, taking their cattle with them,—some southward to Malwa, Guzerat, and Sindh, some northwards to the Punjab and to the Sub-Himalayan forests of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. It was calculated that out of a million and a half inhabitants of Marwar a million had emigrated in this way. Those who set out on the first warning of calamity generally left their homes in good condition and found room for their cattle to graze; among those who clung to their homes till all their resources were exhausted and then fled, the mortality was very great; they were enfeebled by emaciation before they started, and found all the grazing-grounds occupied by the herds which had preceded them. The area sown with winter crops was small and the crops were poor and blighted. An epidemic of cholera broke out in April and spread in all directions with fatal effect. Little could be done to help the famine-stricken population. Relief-houses were opened in the large towns and the British cantonments, and many of the Chiefs exerted themselves to give employment to the distressed; but they had neither the organization nor the wealth to enable them to do this on any large scale. In Ajmir, a small British district surrounded by the Rajputana States, relief-works were opened at the charge of our Government. But the number of applicants was so great that it was found impossible to exercise proper supervision, and the labourers were paid at piece-work rates. The result of this was that only the skilled and able-bodied were taken on, and those most in need of relief were either refused admission or found themselves unable to earn a living. At last the civil officers had to open minor works to meet the wants of these classes. The rains of 1869 delayed their coming till the middle of July; and then the survivors of the emigrants returned. But just when the fields began to promise a plentiful harvest swarms of locusts visited the country and devoured almost all the produce of the ground; and a violent epidemic of fever carried off many of those who had survived the troubles of the past year. There was, however, abundant grass for the cattle, and a brisk importation of grain set in, which brought down prices. At last a good spring harvest in 1870 put an end to the famine.

North-  
Western  
Provinces  
and Punjab.

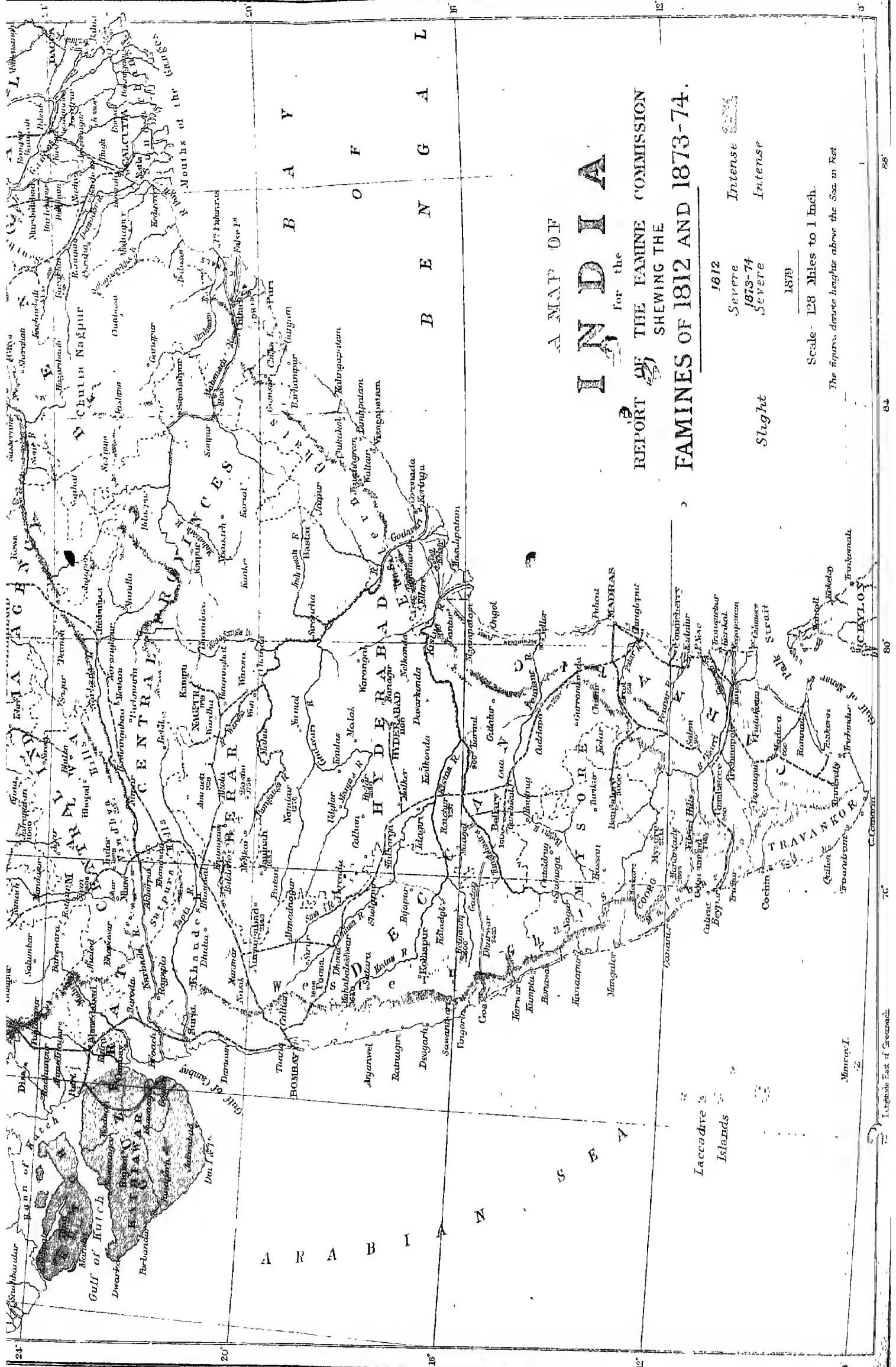
55. The drought of 1868 affected nearly the same part of the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab as had been visited in 1860; but it was less severe, except in the Muttra, Agra, Jhansi, and Lalitpur districts of the North-Western Provinces, in the western half of Rohilkhand, and in the Hansi, Hissar, Rohtak, and Karnal districts of the Punjab. Elsewhere there was some return from the autumn harvests, though a poor one; and the winter crop, though sown on a reduced area, was so good that at one time it was thought that the famine would come to an end in February 1869. This hope was frustrated by the indirect effects produced upon the two provinces by the intensity of famine over so great an area.











A MAP OF  
**INDIA**  
For the  
REPORT OF THE FAMINE COMMISSION  
SHEWING THE  
FAMINES OF 1812 AND 1873-74.

1812	Severe	Intense
1873-74	Severe	Intense
1879		

Scale 128 Miles to 1 Inch.

The figures denote heights above the Sea in Feet



as that of Rajputana, which raised prices to an excessive height and drained away the diminished food stocks; while the influx of emigrants from those parts added to the severe strain on the charity of the public. The coming difficulty had been early foreseen by the Governments of both provinces, and relief measures were planned in good time. In their general outline they corresponded with those which had been adopted on previous occasions; but there were certain alterations in the principles laid down. It was now declared for the first time that the object of Government was to save every life, and that district officers would be held responsible that no preventible deaths should occur. It was found necessary to depart, in some degree, from the old principle, that it is the duty of the public to provide for the gratuitous relief of the infirm and weak, seeing that so large a proportion of these were foreigners and not the local poor; and the Government declared that it would supplement private subscriptions by whatever sum might be necessary for the support of persons incapable of work. Relief of this kind was given in the shape of cooked food, conditional on residence in a poorhouse, and nearly to the system of 1861. Relief to the able-bodied was not confined, as in 1861, to large works of permanent utility under professional officers. There were indeed several of these, but there was also a larger number of minor works under civil officers, which, in some cases, in the opinion of those officers, had the effect of attracting people who were not in immediate need of relief. Wages were fixed at a very low rate, and orders were given to discourage piece-work, but to induce the labourers by constant supervision to turn out a fair amount of work. In the North-Western Provinces about 65,000 persons were employed daily for 12 months on works and about 18,000 daily received gratuitous relief; the total cost was about Rs. 46,00,000. The Punjab expenditure on relief-works is not on record, but about 23,000 received gratuitous relief daily for nine months at a cost of Rs. 4,25,000; and about 3 lakhs of rupees of land-revenue were remitted. The vital statistics in these two provinces were at this time very imperfect; but the result given by them indicates an excess mortality of about 1,200,000, due mainly, not to direct starvation but to diseases obscurely connected with drought and famine—cholera, small-pox, and fever.

56. The north part of the Central Provinces (the northern half of the districts of Saugor Jabalpur and Damoh) was visited by the same drought; and there was a deficient rain-fall in the south-eastern districts (known as the Chatisgarh division) which mainly grow rice. The long duration of high prices and the influx of starving immigrants also caused distress to the poorer classes in most parts of the province. The inhabitants, however, are at once too thinly scattered and generally too well-off and independent to be eager for State relief; and the numbers employed on public works or fed gratuitously were very small. The total expenditure, including advances for seed-grain and plough cattle, amounted to about Rs. 19,00,000. In Bombay the rain-fall of 1868 was very light in Khandesh and Ahmednagar, while great destruction was caused by inundation in Ahmedabad and Kaira; and these difficulties, followed by the general rise of prices and the influx of starvelings from Marwar, caused considerable distress, though hardly amounting to famine. The total expenditure on relief measures was about Rs. 6,30,000.

Central Pro-  
vinces and  
Bombay.

57. The monsoon of 1873 was not abnormal during the three months, June, July, and August, but in Northern Bengal it ceased prematurely in September; and much of the winter rice crop, which ripens in November, was consequently lost. The Bengal Government, from inquiries instituted for the purpose, was led to believe that the inevitable effect of this loss would be to involve the inhabitants of a large part of the province in a severe famine; it accordingly set about making preparations with the utmost energy to carry out relief measures on a scale and with a thoroughness which had never been equalled before. The principles adopted by the Government were very different from those accepted on any former similar occasion. It was considered that the operations of private trade could not be relied on, and therefore that it would be necessary to accept the responsibility of providing the distressed districts with the whole quantity of food likely to be required. After elaborate estimates had been framed it was decided, with the approval of the Government of India and the Secretary of State, to import 480,000 tons of rice; and the greater part of this stock was purchased for the Government in Burma, sent up-country by railway, and distributed to depôts scattered over the famine area by the agency of Government officers. The estimates provided against every possible contingency, the failure of contractors, murrain among the cattle, the recurrence of drought in the ensuing monsoon. Relief was administered mainly in the form of employment on works and of gratuitous

Bengal famine  
of 1873-74.

assistance to the infirm ; but under rules which in their details were very different from those previously followed. Tests were not to be stringently enforced in localities where the distress was excessive and widespread. In place of the self-acting tests which on previous occasions had been held to be useful and to some extent necessary, reliance was placed on personal knowledge, on the part of the relieving officer, of the applicant's condition and wants. A large special establishment of inspecting officers was appointed, and the country subdivided among them, in the hope that, with the help of the resident zemindars and leading ryots, they might obtain such personal knowledge of the condition of every village and its inhabitants. The intention having been formed of preventing loss of life at any cost, so far as practicable, tests or restrictions were relaxed in respect to the wages, the amount of work done, and the character of the work offered ; and sufficient money or grain for their sustenance was allowed to all comers who were *prima facie* in want. Cultivators were invited to take loans of money or rice repayable without interest. About 340,000 tons of grain were disposed of in the relief operations, a quantity sufficient to provide sustenance for not less than three millions of people for several months. The famine area was estimated at 40,000 square miles, and the population affected at 17 millions. Of these 735,000 were employed on works for nine months, 450,000 received gratuitous relief daily for six months, and 3,200,000 bought grain at low rates enough to support them for seven months, or received advances of grain or cash, large part of which was repaid to the Government. When all pressure had passed away the surplus stock of grain left on the hands of the Government amounted to more than 100,000 tons, the provision of a reserve having been designedly made when the original purchase was effected. This had to be sold at a great loss, adding not a little to the total cost of the relief measures, which reached six and a half million sterling, or as much as the total expenditure on all past famines in all parts of India from the beginning of the century up to that time. The result of inquiries specially made on the subject was to indicate that no mortality whatever was due to the famine, and that the bountiful relief given did not have the effect of rendering the population indisposed to return to their usual labours when it ceased.

North-  
Western  
Provinces  
and Oudh.

58. The failure of rain in 1873 extended also to the strip of country on the northern edge of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh which corresponds in position with the most distressed tract in North Behar ; and the loss of the rice crop was almost complete. It was thought necessary to take some measures for the relief of distress on the same system as that followed in 1868-69. In the Gorakhpur and Basti districts, where works were opened in February or March 1874, although the wages were low, the discipline was lax and the task slight, and the numbers employed rapidly rose to more than 200,000. On this becoming apparent, the wage was reduced till it provided only a bare subsistence, stricter discipline and supervision were introduced, and the labourers were no longer allowed to go to their homes at night. Shortly after this the rains set in, and owing to these combined causes the great crowds melted away more rapidly than they had collected, and it was found that there was hardly anyone who really needed relief.

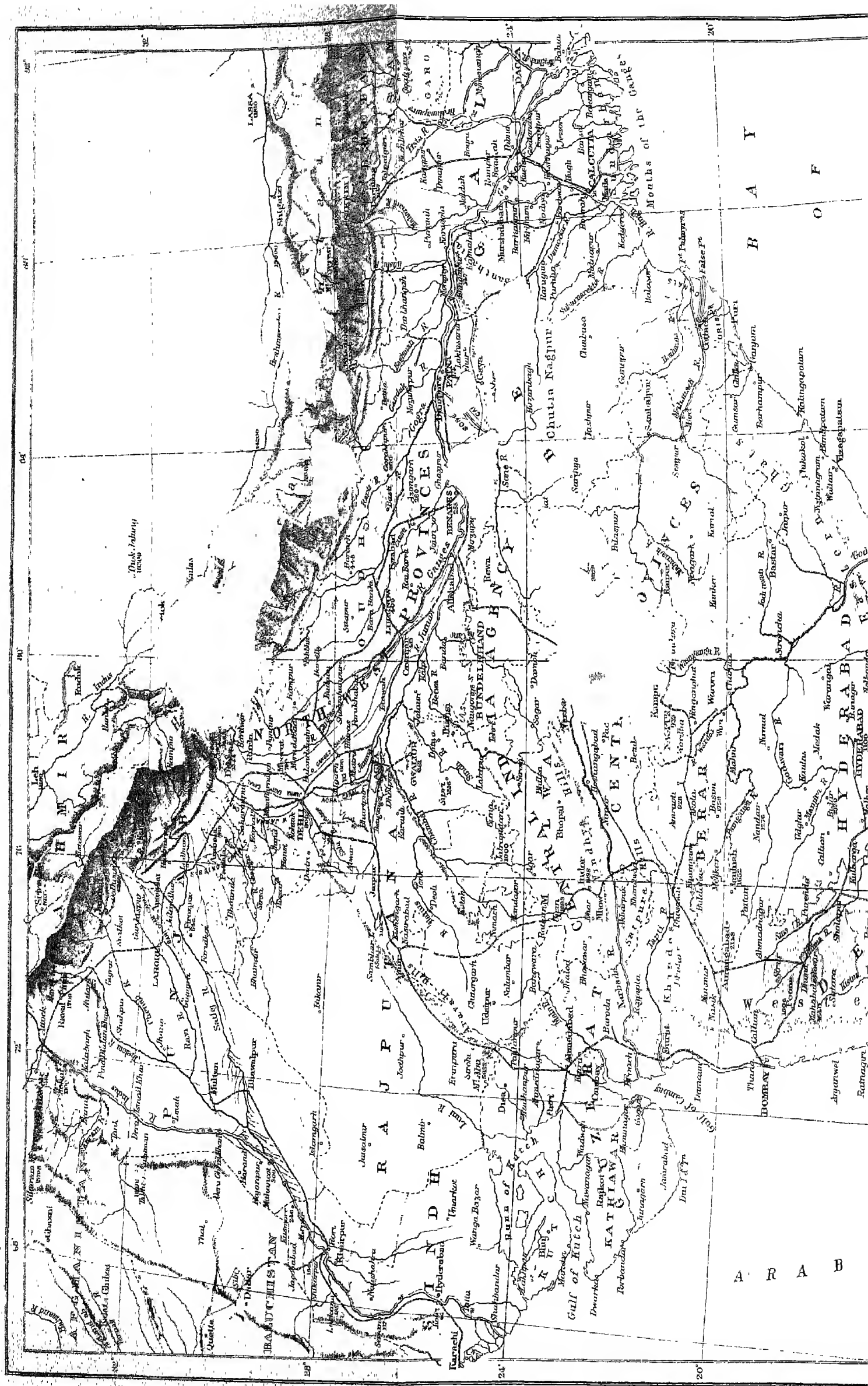
Scarcity of  
1875-76.

59. The alarm raised in 1875 of a threatened scarcity in Behar hardly deserves mention here, except as an illustration of the risk of over-estimating the effect of a failure of the rain-fall where the means of obtaining sound knowledge of the condition of the country do not exist, and profuse expenditure has once been permitted. The rains ceased prematurely, much as they had done in 1873, and anticipations were expressed of a famine which should affect 17 millions of people, and be severe in an area inhabited by 8 millions ; and large proposals were made as to measures of relief involving very heavy outlay. The Government of India, however, resisted what seemed to be a premature alarm on the part of the Bengal Government, and further inquiries gradually narrowed the area of expected distress till nothing remained of it. Eventually prices ruled lower than in ordinary years in the very tract where severe famine had been prognosticated.

Famine of  
1876-78.

60. The great famine in Southern India, which has so recently come to an end, has been, in respect of the area and population affected and the duration and intensity of the distress, the most grievous calamity of its kind experienced in British India since the beginning of the century. The failure of the summer rains of 1876 extended over about half of the Madras Presidency, the distress being most intense in the same tract, that lying above the Eastern Ghats, which suffered in 1833 and in 1854. The scarcity was felt with great severity over the whole of Mysore (except the hilly tracts that lie along the western Ghats), the southern half of the Hyderabad State, and all the Deccan districts of the Bombay Presidency. The area thus affected was about 200,000 square













miles containing a population of 36 millions.\* But this great famine was not wholly restricted as to extent and duration to the effects of the drought of 1876. The monsoon of 1877 was a most irregular one. In the Southern Provinces it began late and feebly, but ended with an excessive downpour, which did great injury to the crops. In part of the Central Provinces, in the North-Western Provinces, and in part of the Punjab, the registered rain-fall was less than any ever before recorded. The autumn crops were almost entirely withered up, and the possibility of sowing the winter crops was only just secured by an extraordinary fall of rain in October, which occurred when almost all hope had gone. The calamitous season of 1877 was accompanied by an extremely high range of prices over all India, due partly to the deficient harvest, and partly to the reduction of the food stocks through export from the Northern Provinces to the south of Europe. These two causes together prolonged the distress in Madras, Mysore, and created great suffering among the poorer classes in the Upper Provinces. The years of famine were also exceptionally marked by a great mortality, partly attributable to virulent outbreaks of cholera, smallpox, and fever. Thus, though the whole area affected by the famine of 1868 exceeded that of 1876-78, the area of great intensity was larger and the duration of excessive pressure was longer in 1876-78.

61. In the earliest stage of the famine a difference of opinion arose between the Supreme Government and the Governments of Bombay and Madras regarding the character of the relief works to be undertaken. The local Governments advocated large works of permanent utility, which would involve the Administration of opening small and scattered works which might not turn out very severe. These objections were, however, withdrawn as the gravity of the impending calamity was realised, and at the same time, in January 1877, Sir R. Temple (selected on account of his experience in Behar in 1874) was appointed famine delegate of the Government of India to inspect the distressed districts with the two Governments concerning the measures for the relief of distress. The instructions given him are of importance in ascertaining the opinions of the Government regarding the nature of their relief of famine. The principle was re-affirmed that the Government should make no efforts "to save the population of the distressed districts from starvation, or from an extremity of suffering dangerous to life," but they would not "attempt the task of preventing all suffering and of giving general relief to the poorer classes of the community." "Every one," it was said, "admits the evils of indiscriminate private charity, but the indiscriminate charity of a Government is far worse." The Government held that "the task of saving life, irrespective of the cost, is one which it is beyond their power to undertake," but believed that "from the history of past famines, rules of action may be learnt which will enable them in the future to provide efficient assistance for the suffering people without incurring disastrous expenditure." The Secretary of State approved these instructions, adding that "in the interests of the distressed population itself, as well of the taxpayers generally, the Government of India was bound to adopt precautions against indolence or imposition, similar, as far as the circumstances of India will permit, to those with which in this country it has always been found necessary to protect the distribution of public relief from abuse."

Policy of  
famine relief.

62. Although the Bombay Presidency has had no serious famine since 1812, it has frequently been visited by local scarcities, and the generally precarious rain-fall of the Deccan upland has accustomed its officers to the prospect of famine and the question of relief. The Bombay Government had before them the records of the Behar famine of 1873-74, and were ready, when the monsoon failed signally in 1876, with a systematic plan of action. They resolved to relieve the distress almost entirely by large public works, and they at once selected several such undertakings of permanent utility to be set in hand. Following the policy approved by Colonel Baird Smith in 1861, they placed these works under the control of professional engineers, rejected the mode of payment by piece-work, fixed the daily wage at a rate just sufficient to support the labourer, and relied on supervision and discipline

Bombay.

	Area.	Population.
Madras - - -	83,800	19,400,000
Bombay - - -	64,000	10,000,000
Mysore - - -	27,100	5,100,000
Hyderabad - - -	30,700	1,900,000
Total - - -	205,600	36,400,000

to get as much useful work done as possible, and they explicitly declared that relief should not be made attractive, but should be so arranged as to secure to all a quantity of food just sufficient for a bare subsistence, with a slight margin over. When the labourers on relief-work struck against the wage and left in large numbers, the Government refused to yield to what they considered unreasonable demands, ordering the district officers to watch over the condition of the men on strike, and to see that they did not linger in their villages so long as to become emaciated. There was no direct interference of the Government in the distribution of grain, except on a very small scale in exceptional circumstances. The number employed for 13 months on these works were 285,000, and the cost was Rs. 3,76,000. There was no novelty in the management of gratuitous relief which arose, the only point to notice being that it was given directly to people at their homes, except in some districts where others had to submit to the test of receiving relief from public centres. The cost of gratuitous relief was 10 lakhs of rupees per annum. In 1877-78 the total was Rs. 33,300. Altogether the cost of relief during the famine was Rs. 1,14,00,000. Since the beginning of distress, the bad season of 1876-77, the Government endeavoured to help people from recovering as quickly as possible out of which they had fallen into poverty amounting to about 14 lakhs of rupees. The land revenue was reduced by one-fourth, and about 30 lakhs suspended in 1879; and it is probable that the whole will ultimately be remitted. The population of the whole Presidency was estimated at 14,00,000 in 1877. The non-famine population was 10,00,000. The population of the non-famine districts to which Kaladgi as high

The Government have been 800,000 in excess of the usual number. The mortality in the famine and the heaviest death-rate occurred in those districts accessible by railway or water, being in the case of Marathwada in 1877.

63. In Mysore the country was the most seriously affected by the catastrophe of 1876 fell upon it. The failure of the harvest was extremely serious, not more than a third of an average crop being obtained in the whole province, and less than a quarter in the most afflicted parts. This led to a great deficiency in the food-supply, which could only be met by artificial means. It was evident that the purchasing power of the people would be subjected to a severe strain, and that what was most required was the means of obtaining wages on large and well-arranged relief-works. The local administration was not blind to the danger, nor slow in setting on foot what were conceived to be sufficient measures of relief; but the arrangements made fell short of the requirements of the case. Proposals to carry out large works were at first sanctioned by the Government of India, and no such undertakings were put in hand before the time for them had almost passed away. No alteration was made at the outset in the ordinary method of carrying out works under the Public Works Department, so that, although some fresh works were opened they were not adapted for any but able-bodied labourers, and the numbers thus relieved were but slightly in excess of those ordinarily employed. All other persons needing relief were considered to be in charge of the civil officer, who was expected to employ them on minor local works, such as were ordinarily carried on under civil officers, as close as possible to their homes. From various causes these works fell into great confusion, and afforded no real support to the people, who gradually drifted into a state of emaciation in which they were only fit for gratuitous relief. Nor was the administration of this form of relief effectual. Cooked food was given liberally at certain centres to all-comers, no conditions of residence being imposed, and too little provision was made for medical assistance. When the rains of 1877 again threatened to fail, and held off in July and August, the crowds at the relief centres and the mortality became very great. It was in these circumstances at the beginning of September that the Viceroy visited Bangalore, and directed the adoption of a system of relief based on the plan followed in Bombay. The labourers were to be concentrated on large works, and the relief establishment was greatly augmented. A fortunate change of weather prevented the carrying out of these orders being practically tested. Rain began to fall in September, and the numbers of the unemployed diminished at once with great rapidity. By the time the monsoon of 1878 set in, the need of famine relief was at an end. But it will be some time before the province recovers its losses, which have been estimated at about a million of human beings, a quarter of a million of cattle, and crops the value of which would have been

9 $\frac{3}{4}$  millions sterling. The number relieved on works and gratuitously was about 150,000 for the 11 worst months, and the total expenditure incurred was about 70 lakhs of rupees, besides remissions of land revenue which amounted to 28 lakhs of rupees. No direct importations of grain were made by the Government, the supply needed for the local gratuitous relief being purchased locally.

64. The Government of Madras has not yet sent in any report on the famine in that Presidency, and we have not had the same facilities as in the cases of Bombay and Mysore in our attempt to trace the history of the distress and the measures of relief in detail. The first peculiarity in the management of the Madras famine was that, following the example of Behar in 1873, the local Government at an early period in the famine thought it necessary to provide for the deficient activity of private trade, or the failure of the supply of food in the most distressed districts, by purchasing 30,000 tons of rice to be stored in places where the demand for relief was expected to be large; and at the same time they proposed to purchase and execute several large works of permanent utility. The Government of India disapproved of both these steps, and decided, as already described, that at this stage of the distress minor local works which would not take the people far from their homes should be organised. The purchased grain was partly used for purposes of relief, and the remainder was sold at the close of the famine. A few large works were started under the Public Works Department, in the middle of 1877, but the great majority of applicants were received on works under the supervision of the civil or military authorities, which had been adopted in Behar. The numbers on relief soon became, to over a million. In that month, when Sir James Fergusson was of opinion that relief was given on a scale and to persons who did not stand in absolute need of it. He advised the Government of Madras to reduce the rate of wages, and they adopted the scale which had been adopted in Bombay, the amount of the money wage being made to vary according to the amount of food grain. After these changes, and on the introduction of strict rules, the numbers on works were at first considerably reduced; but they began to rise again, and in May, and reached the maximum figure of 2,218,000. The effect of the reduced wage was a subject of considerable opinion, and it was strongly opposed by many of the Commissioners, as providing less than subsistence for the labourer. After the orders for its adoption had been in force for three months, the balance of opinion was in favour of its being discontinued at the end of May. At the same time it was decided that all weakly persons, and all who were incapable of performing 50 per cent. of a full task for a man in normal condition, should be removed from the relief works and supported at the home by the Government. A system of house-to-house relief was introduced, under which a dole of money was given sufficient for the support of the pauper. The test of fitness was the certificate of the head village official, submitted to the village inspector, whose proceedings again were under the control of the relief officer of the Taluk, so that opportunities for abuse might be minimised. In the end of August, when it became apparent that relief operations would have to be continued at least till the end of the year on a very large scale, the Viceroy visited Madras, and after consultation with the Governor of that Presidency certain important changes of system were resolved upon, while the main principles on which relief was to be administered were repeated with additional emphasis. It was announced that "a large scheme of useful public works under departmental supervision should be the backbone of the relief system," and a great expansion of such works was ordered, combined with the restriction of gratuitous relief in their villages to "those who are both incapable of work and without other adequate means of support." The direction of all matters connected with the famine, which had hitherto passed through the channel of the Board of Revenue and the Council, was taken by the Governor under his sole charge, who issued his orders directly to the district officer, and a large additional staff of officers was introduced from Northern India to strengthen the supervising agency. These arrangements were hardly complete when, as in Mysore, the long-expected rain began to fall abundantly; the hearts of the people revived, and they dispersed so rapidly that the numbers, which in September had been 2,218,000, had fallen in December to 444,000, and in March 1878 to 215,000. A considerable body of debilitated persons remained, however, on the hands of the Government till the harvest of 1878 was ripe, in October or November. The abnormal mortality of the two famine years has been estimated at two millions, and there was

a decrease of 800,000 in the births of the two years 1877 and 1878; nor did the effects of this decrease come to an end in the latter year. The average number of persons relieved was 787,000 daily for the space of 22 months; and the total cost of the famine is estimated at eight millions sterling. The land revenue remitted was about 118 lakhs of rupees, and the expenditure on relief about 675 lakhs.

The English  
charity.

65. Towards the close of 1877 public in Great Britain and the United States and were of great service in relieving distress from starvation or receiving relief from the Government. One quarter of the sum received was allotted to Mysore, and through the grants, about two thirds of the sum was allotted to agriculturists, the object kept in view was to give to the recipients the means of repurchasing the land on which they were again in their former self-supporting position.

Hyderabad.

66. In the Hyderabad State the famine was severe in the whole of the country. Relief was given as far as possible on the pattern of the Government of Bombay and Madras, and it was given by opening public works and employing persons were employed and the cost was about 32 lakhs of rupees; 32 lakhs of rupees.

The North-  
Western  
Provinces.

67. In the North-Western Provinces the famine was more complete than in any other part of the province. The autumn crop was entirely lost (except in a very large area, and February in the province was a famine. Arrangements were made in September 1877, to prevent many from an end to the need of thousands of persons relief-works under the Government in March to return again in the province again showed signs of a plentiful downfall with the homes and by the end of the year the cost was about 20 lakhs. In 12 months was 55,700, it was in August, 126,800, also reached its maximum.

The history of this famine was for the first time in the Department, with little or no previous experience. The Government was not good. Gratuitous giving of cooked food in a public house was found to be very unpopular. Persons receiving relief were put out of caste. The Government not having been regarded as a famine. The spring harvest turned out a good one, and by the time the autumn crop was ripe the collections were deficient by about 12 lakhs only. The mortality in the province was extremely great, amounting to very nearly double the average, in the 14 months from January 1877 to December 1878, or to an excess number of about 1,250,000. The chief registered causes, cholera, dysentery, and bowel diseases were extremely virulent, but doubtless a large portion of the deaths were due to the pressure of want. At the same time, it is important to record that the amount of ordinary grain procurable for a rupee never fell much below 26 lbs.

68. The failure of the monsoon of 1877 was very complete in the Punjab; but the autumn crop is less important there than in any other part of India, and the rain of October made it possible to sow the usual area with spring crops. Moreover, the preceding years had been very prosperous, and the export of wheat, which had greatly

able contributions began to flow in from the Government, amounting in all to the sum of 678,512, the distress of those not absolutely suffering from famine. One quarter of the sum received was allotted to the Madras Presidency. In distributing the sum to agriculturists and one third to non-agriculturists, the view was to give to the recipients the means of repurchasing the land on which they were again in their former self-supporting position.

tense in the tongue of land which the Government of Bombay and Madras, and it was given as far as possible on the pattern of the Government of Bombay and Madras, and it was given by opening public works and employing persons were employed and the cost was about 32 lakhs of rupees; 32 lakhs of rupees.

The failure of rain in 1877 was very complete in the Punjab; but the autumn crop was almost entirely lost in the northern and southern districts. The winter crop to be sown over a cloudy weather in January was an average one. The distress otherwise have been an intense famine. The poor-houses were made early in the autumn, and the briskness of field labour was thrown out of work hundreds of persons. The spring harvest again offered the relief-works in large crowds, and despondency as the rains fell. In August, however, there was the people rapidly dispersed to their homes. The total number on relief-works for the month the number in the poor-houses

me points of interest. The relief-works were managed by the officers of the Public Works Department, and the effect of this was to ministered exclusively on the principle of the Government of the persons who accepted this form of relief. The Government of village inspection was adopted, the distress was suspended at the end of 1877, but when the Government ordered arrears to be got in as far as possible, and by the time the autumn crop was ripe the collections were deficient by about 12 lakhs only. The mortality in the province was extremely great, amounting to very nearly double the average, in the 14 months from January 1877 to December 1878, or to an excess number of about 1,250,000. The chief registered causes, cholera, dysentery, and bowel diseases were extremely virulent, but doubtless a large portion of the deaths were due to the pressure of want. At the same time, it is important to record that the amount of ordinary grain procurable for a rupee never fell much below 26 lbs.

increased in the years 1876 and 1877, brought large sums of money to the province. The scarcity, however, became serious in some places through the height to which prices had risen in consequence of the famine of the south, and by reason of the influx of starving people from Kashmir. The parts which suffered most from the drought were those districts of the Delhi and Hissar divisions not protected by the Western Jumna canal, which were among the first affected, and the hill district of Hazara, which had no to suffer in any earlier famine. The distress was, however, nowhere ordinary measures were taken to supply relief, and with the rains of famine passed away. The mortuary returns, however, which less mortality of about 340,000 above the average during the year for fearing that the high prices had a grievous effect on the poor valuation.

69. The following table show in order the years in which the provinces affected by consequent Chronological list of famines. scarcity :—

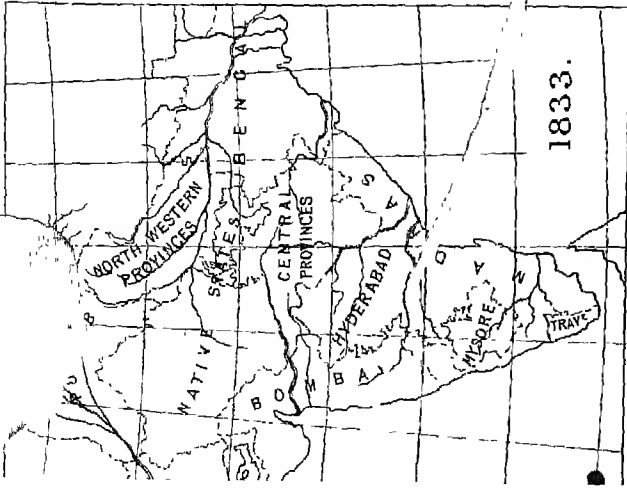
Year.	Area of Drought	Area of Famine or Scarcity.
		Bengal.
1783	Drought in Upper India	and scarcity in Bombay.
1784	-	from the Karamnasa to
1791	Drought in Bombay,	
1792	-	of Madras. Intense and Southern Mahratta in Deccan, Guzerat,
1802	Drought in South Hydr	
1803	Drought in Ceded Provinces and in C	and Hyderabad.
1804	-	-Western Provinces, and India and Rajputana.
1806	Drought in Central Districts of Trichinopoly to Nellore.	
1807	-	entral Districts of Madras.
1812	Drought in Guzerat, Kutch, and Kathiawar to some extent in Madras; also in Raj and Central India.	
1813	-	in Kutch and Kathiawar; intense in of Rajputana. Scarcity in parts of Western Provinces and of Madras.
1823	Drought in Madras.	
1824	Drought in Bombay	n Madras, chiefly in the north.
1825	-	n Bombay, chiefly in Guzerat and the n Deccan.
1832	Drought in Northern districts of Madras, except Ganjam, in the south of Hyderabad, and the Southern Mahratta districts of Bombay.	
	Drought in north part of Bombay, in Rajputana, parts of Punjab and North-Western	Fa i S orthern districts of Madras; intense . Scarcity in Hyderabad and Mahratta districts.
1834	-	Scar, Ra the Pro North Deccan and Guzerat, in the Hissar division of Punjab, and nna districts of North-Western
1837	Drought in North-Western Provinces, Eastern States of Rajputana, and south-east part of Punjab.	

Year.	Area of Drought.	Area of Famine or Scarcity.
1838	Drought in Guzerat, Kutch, and Kathiawar	Intense famine in Central Doab and trans-Jumna districts of North-Western Provinces, and in Delhi and Hissar divisions of Punjab.
1839	- - - - -	Scarcity in Guzerat, Kutch, and Kathiawar.
1844	Scanty rain-fall in Deccan.	
1845	- - - - -	Scarcity in Deccan.
1853	Drought in Ceded districts of Madras, South Hyderabad, and Sholapur and Kattywar districts of Bombay.	
1854	- - - - -	Famine in Bellary. Scarcity in adjoining parts of Madras, Hyderabad, and Bombay.
1860	Drought in part of North-Western Provinces and Punjab, and neighbouring States of Rajputana.	
1861	- - - - -	Famine in Upper Doab or North-Western Provinces, in Delhi and Hissar divisions of Punjab, and in adjoining parts of Rajputana. Scarcity in Kutch.
1865	Drought in northern districts of Hyderabad and South Malabar, Orissa and Behar.	
1866	- - - - -	Famine in Ganjam and Bellary districts of Madras, in Orissa (intense), and in Behar. Scarcity in all adjacent parts of Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad, and Bombay, and in Central and Western Bengal.
1868	Drought in Rajputana, and in north and south-east districts of Punjab from Jumna to the Indus.	
1869	- - - - -	Famine in Western Rajputana (intense), in trans-Jumna districts of Allahabad and Delhi, and Hissar divisions of Punjab. Scarcity in adjacent parts of North-Western Provinces and Punjab, in Guzerat, Kutch, and North Deccan, and in the north and south-east districts of Central Provinces.
1873	Drought in North Behar and a part of North-Western Provinces and Oudh.	
1874	- - - - -	Famine in Behar and scarcity in the strip of North-Western Provinces and Oudh adjacent.
1876	Drought in all Madras and Deccan, Mysore and south part of Hyderabad.	
1877	Drought in Central Provinces, North-Western Provinces, and Punjab.	Famine in Madras, Mysore, Bombay, and Hyderabad.
1878	- - - - -	Famine in North-Western Provinces and Cashmere. Scarcity in Punjab.

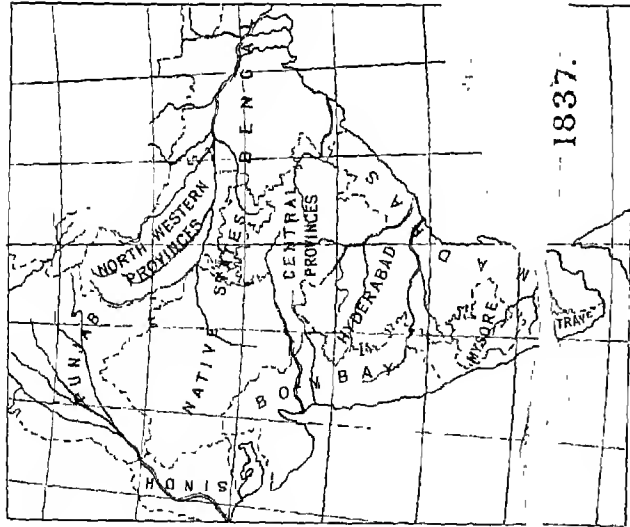
Synoptical  
view

70. The following table, which embraces the period from 1769 to 1878, or 109 years, shows the years in which famines and scarcities have occurred in the chief provinces of India, the degree of intensity and the duration of each, the intervals of

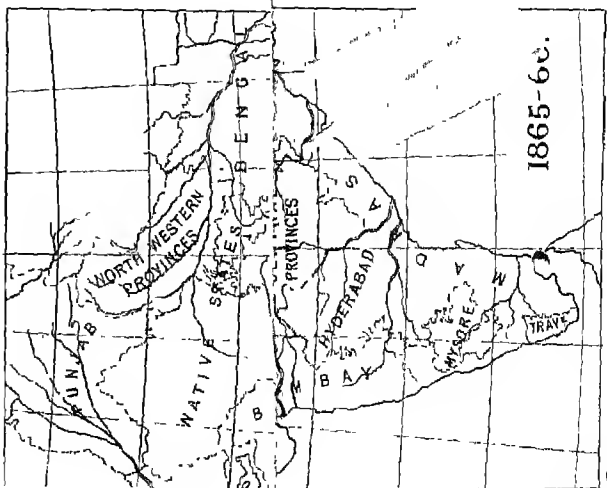




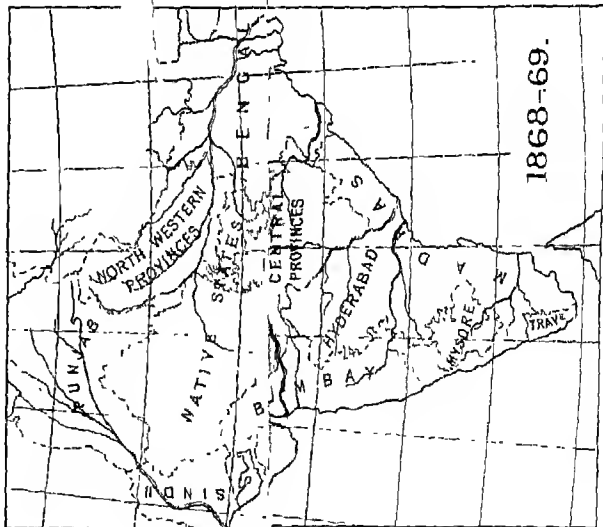
1833.



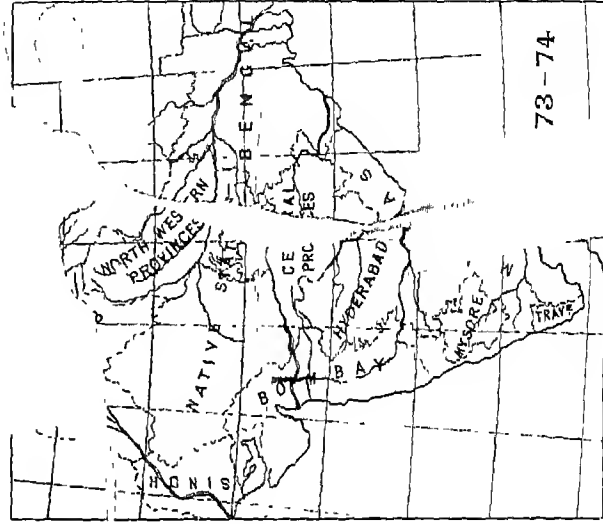
1837.



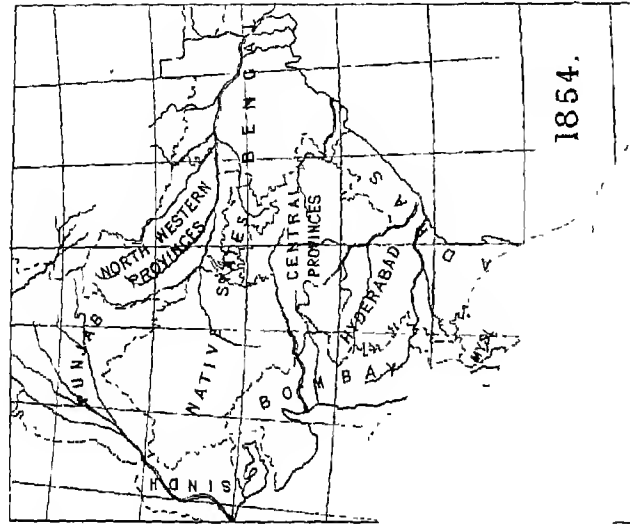
1865-66.



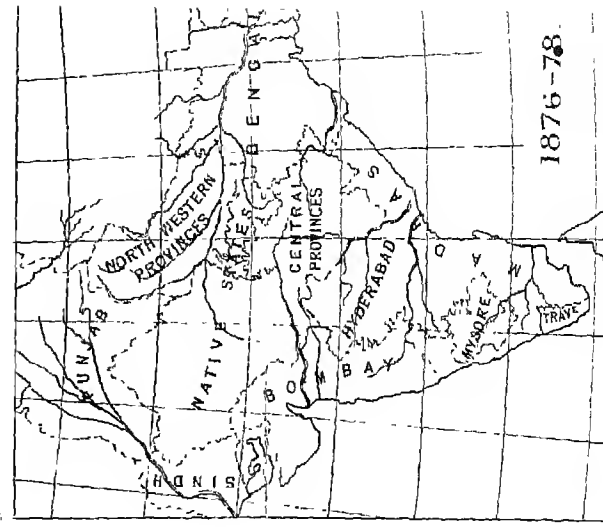
1868-69.



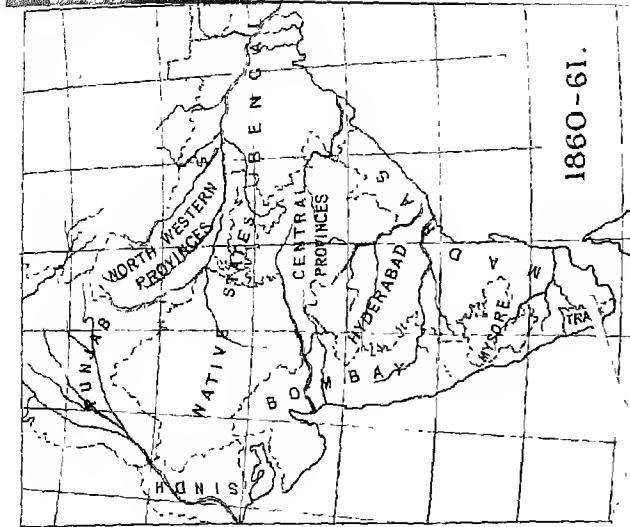
73-74



1854.



1876-78.



1860-61.



time between their occurrence, and the resulting averages as regards each province and the whole of India:—

	BENGAL.			N.W. PROVINCES AND PUNJAB.			BOMBAY.			MADRAS			ALL INDIA.		
	Severity.	Years.		Severity.	Year		Duration.	Years.		Severity.	Years.		Severity.	Years.	
		Duration.	Interval.		Duration.	Interval.		Duration.	Interval.		Duration.	Interval.		Duration.	Interval.
1769-70	***	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***	1	.
1782-3	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	13	**	2	13	**	**	1	12
1783-4	*	1	13	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***	1	.
1791-2	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	8	**	1	7	**	***	1	7
1803-4	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	10	.	.	.	.	**	1	10
1806-7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	13	**	1	2
1812-13	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	5
1823-4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	16	**	1	10
1824-5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	1	.
1832-3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	8	***	1	7
1833-4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	1	.
1837-8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***	1	3
1838-9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	1	.
1844-5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	1	5
1853-4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	20	**	1	8
1860-1	.	.	.	**	1	22	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	6
1865-6	***	2	81	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	11	***	2	4
1868-9	.	.	.	**	1	7	***	2	.	.	.	.	***	2	1
1873-4	**	1	6	*	1	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	**	1	3
1876-7	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	31	***	2	10	***	***	2	2
1877-8	.	.	4	**	1	3	*	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total No. of Famines or Scarcities	4	.	.	9	.	.	8	.	.	8	.	.	21	.	.
Total No. of Years affected by Famine	.	5	.	.	9	.	.	9	.	.	10	.	.	24	.
Total No. of Years of Interval without Famine	.	.	104	.	.	100	.	.	99	.	.	99	.	.	85
Average No. of Years of Interval without Famine	.	.	26	.	.	11	.	.	11	.	.	12	.	.	4

N.B.—One asterisk denotes a severe scarcity  
Two asterisks denote a famine.  
Three asterisks denote an intense famine

Famine  
statistics.

71. The following table shows the area and the population affected and the numbers relieved in each of the principal famines of this century, the sums expended on relief of different kinds, the remissions of the land revenue, and the amount by which the income from other sources was diminished, so far as data exist for such a statement. The blanks more frequently mean that there is no information on record than that nothing ought to be entered under the heading in question.

	Area in square miles	Population affected.	Average Numbers employed daily on Relief-works.	For how many Months.	Average Number daily relieved gratuitously.	Cost of Relief-works.	Gratuitous Relief		Cost of Importation of Grain.	Advances to the Landed Classes.	Loss of Land Revenue.	Other Expenditure and loss of Income from other sources	Total Cost to Government.
							Cost to Government.	Contributed by the Public.					
						Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1803. North-Western Provinces.	20,000	8,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,00,000	32,00,000	—	42,00,000
1824-5 { Bombay	50,000	8,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8,05,000	—	—
Madras	60,000	10,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9,00,000	2,25,000	—
Total of 1824-5	110,000	18,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17,05,000	2,25,000	19,30,000
1832-3 { Madras	76,100	10,600,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bombay	28,500	4,400,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hyderabad	25,200	1,100,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1832-3	129,800	16,100,000	—	—	—	—	3,00,000	—	—	—	87,31,200	15,32,000	1,05,33,200
1837-8 { North-Western Provinces	56,100	21,500,000	—	—	—	—	8,000	3,50,000	—	—	95,00,000	—	—
Native States	57,500	6,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1837-8	113,600	27,500,000	—	—	—	—	8,000	3,50,000	—	—	95,00,000	—	1,14,73,000
1845. Bombay	23,400	3,400,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6,47,800	—	6,47,800
1853-4 { Madras	0,000	800,000	—	—	—	12,28,000	3,20,000	—	—	—	30,75,000	11,25,000	—
Hyderabad	24,000	2,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1853-4	24,000	2,800,000	—	—	—	12,28,000	3,20,000	—	—	—	30,75,000	11,25,000	53,03,000
1860-1 { North-Western Provinces	31,100	14,900,000	25,14	—	33,800	9	9,14,200	2,00,000	3,50,100	—	3,03,000	2,34,700	3,40,000
Punjab	10,700	4,200,000	9,01	—	50,000	9	3,25,000	3,11,800	5,22,200	—	3,28,000	14,00,000	2,00,000
Native States	5,700	1,200,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1860-1	53,500	20,300,000	34,100	—	83,800	—	12,39,200	5,12,100	8,72,600	—	6,31,000	16,34,700	5,40,000
1865-6 { Bengal	64,500	24,200,000	6,650	—	55,200	17	13,48,000	1,000	18,33,000	62,12,600	—	15,84,000	37,00,000
Madras	53,200	19,200,000	16,580	—	45,000	11	6,60,000	2,83,000	2,75,000	—	—	15,00,000	—
Mysore	6,700	1,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hyderabad	7,000	700,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bombay	18,700	3,400,000	—	—	—	—	1,23,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1865-6	180,400	47,600,000	23,230	—	0,800	—	21,31,000	2,84,000	21,08,000	62,12,600	—	30,84,000	37,00,000
1868-9 { Rajputana	173,800	14,700,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North-Western Provinces	44,300	16,700,000	85,870	12	18,670	9	25,56,000	2,33,000	1,05,000	21,000	10,10,000	2,20,000	3,50,000
Punjab	19,400	5,600,000	7,180	12	22,800	9	—	1,70,000	2,55,000	—	8,31,000	3,00,000	—
Central Provinces	41,500	4,400,000	5,760	12	6,100	12	4,89,200	2,75,000	64,400	—	2,20,700	500	—
Bombay	17,200	3,000,000	—	—	—	—	5,44,000	48,000	46,000	—	—	—	—
Total of 1868-9	296,200	44,400,000	71,430	—	—	—	35,89,200	7,26,000	5,60,400	21,000	20,76,700	5,20,500	3,80,000
1873-4 { Bengal	40,100	17,750,000	661,560	10	452,300	6	1,90,00,000	31,71,000	—	3,92,44,000	15,00,000	—	—
North-Western Provinces	11,200	2,900,000	119,000	—	2,760	9	8,10,600	41,600	82,500	—	14,200	—	—
Oudh	2,900	750,000	30,000	—	—	—	3,17,100	17,000	27,000	—	—	—	—
Total of 1873-4	54,200	21,400,000	810,560	—	455,060	—	2,02,23,700	32,30,500	70,500	3,92,44,000	15,00,000	—	6,75,95,700
1876-8 { Madras	83,800	19,400,000	480,000	23	327,500	22	—	—	—	—	1,18,00,000	—	8,00,00,000
Mysore	27,100	5,100,000	53,500	20	50,400	20	29,50,000	31,25,000	—	—	28,00,000	21,00,000	1,09,75,000
Hyderabad	30,700	1,900,000	22,100	9	16,300	6	8,38,000	2,44,000	—	—	82,60,000	2,83,000	49,95,000
Bombay	84,000	10,000,000	28,000	13	32,687	13	1,05,00,000	12,00,000	—	—	15,00,000	11,40,000	1,43,40,000
North-Western Provinces and Oudh	34,800	15,400,000	5,724	12	13,754	12	18,00,300	3,91,900	—	—	—	—	18,93,200
Punjab	18,900	3,600,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total of 1876-8	257,300	58,500,000	877,024	—	446,641	—	1,68,83,300	48,60,900	—	—	1,38,60,000	35,33,000	11,19,43,200

72. The first lesson taught by this review is that (except in Burmah and the most eastern parts of Bengal, where the rain has never been known to fail, and Sindh, in which the population is wholly dependent on river-irrigation) hardly any part of our Indian Empire has escaped the visitation of severe famine during the last century, and that over considerable portions acute distress has recurred frequently. Taking all the 21 famines and scarcities recorded in the last 100 years in any part of India, the proportion is 24 years of bad seasons to 85 years of good, or about two bad to seven good; in each case on an average one-twelfth of the population of the whole country, that is about 20 millions, may be approximately taken as the portion affected, so that the result might be said to be equivalent to a famine or scarcity over the whole country once in 54 years. Of these calamities, 8 may be classed as intense famines, 9 as famines, and 4 as scarcities.

Omitting severe scarcities, there have been 17 famines, affecting 20 years, and occurring at an average interval of 5 years.

There have been eight greater famines, affecting 11 years, and occurring at intervals which have varied from 2 or 3 to 12 years, and which average 12 years. Of these, five have occurred in the present century, and have affected 202 millions of people, so that each on an average has been visited by 40 millions, or one-sixth of the population of India. As, however, the population is not under British rule, a corresponding reduction must be made to the liability of the Government.

73. The history of the severe droughts which have occurred, of which two only have occurred, of which two Bengal had enjoyed complete immunity, as well as in 1783-4, or in the North-West Provinces in 1837-8, were separated by a frequent and highly irregular occurrence of nine seasons of drought appear, of which were eight such seasons, of which two were extreme, and the interval between the several recorded droughts is about 11 to 12 years, and between those of the deviations from these averages are very large, accurate to give more than approximate results.

These conclusions may be otherwise summed up. In some degree of severity, in some part of the country, as often as two out of every nine; and that is of 12 years. The danger of severe distress must be expected to recur more frequently of late years than formerly; but, bearing in mind the far greater attention paid to these visitations recently, our general conclusion is adverse to such a supposition.

74. Whatever may be the ultimate result of scientific discussion as to the existence of a true periodical fluctuation in the rain-fall, we can now only conclude that no such knowledge exists as to afford any ground for administrative action based on well-founded anticipation of the quantity of the rain-fall from year to year; and that whatever preparations we make to meet seasons of scarcity must rest on the presumption that, though their recurrence is inevitable, they will come upon us with very little warning and at very irregular intervals.

75. It is manifestly important to form the best possible estimate of the greatest area of largest population likely to be visited by famine at any one time. The experience of the past shows that seasons of drought do not occur simultaneously in Southern and Northern India, though some tendency is shown for a bad year in the north immediately to follow a bad year in the south. No deficiency at once so serious and so widespread in its effects as that which from 1876 to 1878 was experienced in various parts of the country had previously occurred in the century. The total area which suffered from famine in Southern India during 1877 was about 200,000 square miles, with a population of 36 millions. In the next year an area of 52,000 square miles in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, with a population of 22 millions, was afflicted by a failure of the rains, though it suffered to a far less degree

The number of famines and the intervals between them.

Liability of different provinces to drought.

Irregularity of the recurrence of droughts.

Probable greatest area of famine and extent of relief.

Distinguishing the three degrees of famine as intense, severe, and slight, the famine in Southern India was intense in an area of 105,000 square miles, inhabited by a population of 19 millions; severe in an area of 66,000 square miles, with a population of 11 millions; and slight in an area of 34,000 square miles, with a population of 6 millions. the distress was but slight the necessity for giving relief arose only in isolated localities, and the administration of famine relief on such a scale as to need special measures was in practice confined to the tracts where the famine was intense. evere. Relief was afforded to 780,000 persons or 5 per cent. of the nonul of the more affected area in Madras for 22 consecutive or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., for 13 months. Thrst month was about 500,000 daily in to 15 per cent. of the population severe

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provinces and Bombay, and wherever the two

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Relation  
between  
drought and  
duration of  
famine.

and the prospects of the winter rice are well assured. In Madras and Mysore, if the crops grown under the south-western monsoon are lost, much may be retrieved if the N.E. monsoon is good and fills the tanks and rivers, so that a large area of rice land can be artificially irrigated; if this too fails, no crop will come in materially to assist the people till the succeeding autumn. Experience shows that extreme pressure does not arise till local stocks have been somewhat reduced, and famine is thus hardly known to begin, as a consequence of a failure of the south-west monsoon, before the month of November. Again, when the prospects of the next harvest are practically assured, hope and credit revive and reserved stores of food are released, and thus the effects of famine may be expected to wear off a month or two before the crops are actually cut. From considerations it may be gathered that the pressure caused by drought in a single year will generally last for about eight or nine months, and when the pressure is relieved in a shorter time, the recovery is proportionally rapid. A scarcity extending over two years is rare, but the intensity of the suffering caused by such a famine is greatly aggravated as the period is prolonged.

77. From what is known of famines in respect to which any materials for a detailed estimate exist, it is calculated that from half to three-quarters of the ordinary out-turn of the food grain of the year has been lost in the tracts most severely affected. It may therefore be inferred from the experience of the past that a year which yields more than 50 per cent. of a full crop will be enough for the population under such conditions, and that, taking into account the no such pressure as to require special measures of relief. When the year is diminished to 25 per cent. of the ordinary out-turn, it may be taken as certain that intense famine will prevail. However, surround all estimates of failure of crops in such a particular circumstances of a prolonged drought more than one year's out-turn will be easily happen that the part of the authorities,

the stimulus caused by grain stores and the probable import of special measures of relief. When the year is diminished to 25 per cent. of the ordinary out-turn, it may be taken as certain that intense famine will prevail.

of failure of crops in such a particular circumstances of a prolonged drought more than one year's out-turn will be easily happen that the part of the authorities,

78. There is much difficulty in estimating the effect of a short harvest on prices, but it may be said approximately that, in time of very great scarcity, prices of food will rise to three or four times the ordinary amount, so that a mass of the people may be reduced to a state of great suffering and mortality. During the next few years, all branches of the administration improved, the sense of this obligation fully acted on; but there can be little doubt that the people were very incompletely met, and that much suffering and mortality must have ensued. Allowing for the cases in which the State relief, and a somewhat larger amount of land revenue, for a total population rising from 100 to 150 millions, sums which have been spent more recently on similar occasions, amounting during the years 1873-1879 to not less than 14½ millions in England, which for a population of 34 millions amounted to about 7 or 8 millions in a single year. But relatively small as the amount has been, the administration of even such restricted measures of relief has, in the

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79. The figures given in the table in paragraph 81 show all that can now be ascertained as to the cost of the relief given to Indian famines. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century the position of the British in the country was not such as either to create any sense of a general obligation to give relief, or to supply the means of doing it. During the next 30 or 40 years, as the country became settled, the sense of this obligation gradually improved, the sense of this obligation fully acted on; but there can be little doubt that the people were very incompletely met, and that much suffering and mortality must have ensued. Allowing for the cases in which the State relief, and a somewhat larger amount of land revenue, for a total population rising from 100 to 150 millions, sums which have been spent more recently on similar occasions, amounting during the years 1873-1879 to not less than 14½ millions in England, which for a population of 34 millions amounted to about 7 or 8 millions in a single year. But relatively small as the amount has been, the administration of even such restricted measures of relief has, in the



Effects of  
scarcity on  
the death-  
rate.

absence of a clearly defined set of principles and rules, and under the conditions which necessarily attend these measures, taxed to the utmost the powers of the Government.

80. There is great difficulty in forming any trustworthy estimate of the mortality directly consequent on famine. If of deaths have been commenced incomplete, and in many cases have been such as to show that much prolonged generalizations on the laws of life and others are no better than speculation among various classes of the people. Labouring classes and village artisan suffice, however, to give positive probabilities seasons of scarcity, though the two phenomena can be regarded as cause and effect. Great epidemics almost always follow famine, and pestilence while it withers the crops, export may be reasonably supposed to be the occurrence of the summer rains, such as abnormal to human life and favour famine, if not the direct cause, inasmuch as if the condition more unfavorable than this condition on the extent of the famine called. The direct cause is incorrect, and the causes, such as simple and chronic starvation which, when they turn themselves in seasons of scarcity.

Mortality  
during the  
famine of  
1876-8,  
and in the  
last 30 years.  
\*App. No. II.

81. It has been found that the mortality during the period of famine on a population of 100 millions occurred had the same as in the last 30 years. It is made certain, what it is to check the fecundity of the population, the number of births during the reduction of the population with the ordinary annual death-rate of the people, to be  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions, to be regarded as having increased to 10 millions.

Such a famine, however, of such extent and duration, and so rare, as to be of extremely rare recurrence alone an estimate of any value from 1848 to 1878 the abnormal mortality was short of 10 millions. This annual mortality, which, spread over 2 per mille. Even if this the effect of famine would be due to its ultimate causes and to its ultimate importance than might at first be supposed.

Relation of  
famine mor-  
tality to  
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tality.

82. The true significance of these figures will be better appreciated when they are considered with reference to ordinary fluctuations in the mortality of the country. There is no doubt not only that the general death-rate when compared with that of England is high, but that it is liable to far greater variations. The yearly death-rate of many Indian towns, where registration can be more exactly conducted than in the country, appears from the reports of recent years to have risen occasionally for many months together to rates varying from 40 to 100 per mille, and even higher. In the

within recent years that systematic registers have been kept in all parts of India; everywhere they are still very far from being more than rough approximations to the truth. In one census has been taken the results are of little value, experience is required before any trustworthy estimate can be based on actual facts; and all statistics exist as to the distribution of deaths during famine, though it is certain that the people who suffer most. The registers now kept in India show a very greatly increased mortality that accompanies seasons of scarcity, and the statistics exist as to the degree in which the mortality is increased in other in the relation of cause and effect upon seasons of severe scarcity, the spring of the drought, which, the supply to pollution; and it is the obstructions which prevent the famine as a consequence of the drought.

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tion—and there can be no being in want of food—then the probability a very great influence, by whatever name it may be called, in the statistics is, moreover, very doubtful often attributed to other causes. Death from famine is not only supposed. The effect of famine is in the intestinal organs, and which manifest themselves in diseases.

Substantial grounds,\* that the Administration during the years 1877 and 1878 amounted, the deaths that would have occurred had the statistical returns have been the same, that famine and distress greatly increased the mortality. It is probable that from this cause the mortality has been lessened by two millions; the total amount to about seven millions. Assuming the mortality at the rate of 35 per mille on 190 millions of people, the normal mortality of the famine period may be estimated at about 40 per cent.

The mortality of 1877-78 is almost unprecedented in severity. If the mortality, it may reasonably be hoped, is likely to be less than the famines of the last 30 years, as to which no estimate can be made, it would perhaps be safe to say that the deaths which occurred in years of famine did not fall far below an increased mortality of about 300,000 per mille on a population of about 200 millions, would be less than is in error to the extent of one-half of the truth, viewed in relation to the fluctuations due to other causes on the growth of the population, be much less than has been supposed.

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many years. The famine of 1803 struck such a blow at the prosperity of Khandesh and Ahmednagar that even in 1867 the traces of its ravages were still visible in the ruins of deserted villages which had not been repopulated. In the famine of 1833 so much land went out of cultivation in the Gantur district that even in 1850 the land revenue was only three-fourths of what it had been in 1832. In 1837, in the North-Western Provinces, "the pressure was so great that the ordinary bonds of society seemed to be broken by it. In 1841, the still deserted lands and abandoned houses" in the Etawah district bore evidence to the devastation and waste of life, and during the next five years the land revenue continued to be less by 12 per cent. than in the period preceding the famine." Col. Baird Smith, from whom the above quotation is made, testified that similar effects were hardly noticeable in 1860-1, and this he attributed to the increased power of resistance and self-support among the landowners following the introduction of long-term settlements, which dated from about 1840. Still more remarkable are the facts recorded in the agricultural statistics of Bombay and Madras for the year 1877-8. In Madras the area occupied exceeded by 50,000 acres that of 1874-5, and the land revenue was eight lakhs of rupees in excess of the average demand before the famine. In Bombay there was an actual increase of 70,000 acres of revenue-paying occupied land in excess of the previous year, and the land revenue was increased by one lakh over that of 1876-7, and by  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs over the average of the last 10 years. As the Secretary of State remarked,

Despatch,  
26 Feb. 1880.

“ in a year itself of deficiency of crop  
“ which immediately succeeded the  
“ facts testify to a remarkable d  
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Certainty of  
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85. We now pass to the Government in time conviction was attained against which such proof that it is the duty of protecting the country the problem has been total absence, until with knowledge as to the number and the influence on the an equally insufficient insight absence of agricultural statistics vast importance of knowledge many quarters. The want of our inquiries, and we feel it to subject, as such knowledge is, in which the Government must rely

# Historical sketch of the views of Government in respect of famine relief.

86. An equally remarkable change in the manner of viewing the obligations of the Government in dealing with famines is indicated by a comparison of the measures of relief offered to the country 50 years ago with those now considered necessary. This change has been the direct consequence of a greatly increased knowledge of the real condition of the people. As the officers of the Government have gradually become more alive to the actual consequences of extreme scarcity and to their terrible character, and have painfully obtained by experience an insight into the manner in which these calamities arise and in which they are to be met, in the same proportion has the sense of the grave duty that rests upon the State to avert the results of famine been quickened, and the action of the Government stimulated. No sterner warning could be given of the paramount necessity of obtaining a true knowledge of the condition of the great population which we have undertaken to govern in British India, than is to be found in the history of the famines that have desolated it. We must not permit ourselves to be deceived by the vain hope that the famines of recent years have been more difficult to deal with than those of the past, nor have we any right to suggest that those who have gone before us were less humane than ourselves, for there is direct evidence to the contrary. The lesson of experience is that it is vain to attempt to deal successfully with these calamities, which so frequently deprive a large proportion of the people of their food supply, without a liberal expenditure of money, that in order to be effectual this expenditure

must be applied with careful attention to the exact conditions under which these visitations arise, and that as a primary condition of success in the administration of relief a more thorough insight into the vital and economical statistics of the country is absolutely essential.

87. The miseries of famine, and the possibility of interference, were at the earliest period of the British administration of India the topics of official consideration. The great famine of Bengal gave rise to a special inquiry and to the enactment of measures for the alleviation of similar future disasters, and the authors of the Permanent Settlement were keenly sensible of the serious character of Indian droughts, and that one of the effects of that measure would be to put the country and its people in a better position for enduring them. In the famines of 1782, 1792, and 1793 in Madras, 1784 in Bengal, and 1792 in Bombay, the Government, at the time, appears to have acted on the belief that proper remedies were to be found in prohibitions of the export of grain, its price, and other interferences with its sale. It was not till the famines of 1812 in Bombay and of 1824 in Bengal that the idea of non-interference with trade as

But the idea of systematic interference with trade as a means of relief was not adopted till the famine of 1837-8.

resources of the country we could be made at the effect. machinery existed for the collection of the rapid transmission of all, till improvements in the means of transport of grain were feasible, and with good reason, to counteract or even materially like other natural phenomena, Native Governments whom they ultimately succeeded, and the unsystematic acts of almsgiving, and the while breathing a tone of sympathy and compassion, are busied rather with its financial results, as towards its shareholders, than with schemes, for counteracting the inevitable loss of life.

89. As early, however, as 1792 we find the relief of the famine distress of that year the which has been invariably followed by the subsequent famine which visited that province. The expedient form of relief gave rise to a controversy, people's homes, and the importation of grain by which has been renewed on subsequent occasions, and cannot

90. The famine of 1837 in Upper India was a which arrangements were made to meet distress by further progress towards formulating the principles on which the administration of relief ought to be based. It was accepted as the general rule for apportioning responsibilities of the Government and the public with regard to relief, that to offering employment to the able-bodied, while the duties of the Government belonged to the helpless and infirm attached, as in ordinary times, to the care of the public. This doctrine, with modifications, re-appeared on various subsequent occasions, was distinctly reaffirmed by the Orissa Famine Commissioners, and has been in quite recent times been affirmed in favour of the view that the State cannot vest itself by delegation to others of the responsibility of providing the necessary relief for every class of a famine-stricken population, including that class which is only the most helpless.

91. The famine which twenty-three years later visited the same province was the subject of still more careful treatment and elaborate organization. Large public works for the able-bodied, employment near their homes for those who could not travel far from their villages, and gratuitous aid, generally in the form of poor-houses, and mainly at the expense of the charitable public, were the chief measures of relief. The searching inquiry which was instituted into its history and its causes is described in the well-known Report of Colonel Baird Smith, throws much light on the whole subject

its mitigation by State interference. In the administration of India the topics of official consideration were at the earliest period of the British administration of India the topics of official consideration. The great famine of Bengal gave rise to a special inquiry and to the enactment of measures for the alleviation of similar future disasters, and the authors of the Permanent Settlement were keenly sensible of the serious character of Indian droughts, and that one of the effects of that measure would be to put the country and its people in a better position for enduring them. In the famines of 1782, 1792, and 1793 in Madras, 1784 in Bengal, and 1792 in Bombay, the Government, at the time, appears to have acted on the belief that proper remedies were to be found in prohibitions of the export of grain, its price, and other interferences with its sale. It was not till the famines of 1812 in Bombay and of 1824 in Bengal that the idea of non-interference with trade as

Earliest views as to relief and interference with trade.

to prevent the suffering of later times. While the Government of India still carried on the same policy, the area, population, and the number of crops, while no vital statistics, or reliable, and, above all, the railways rendered the powers of man to be endured, and the agency. The Government, and to whom the Bengal Government, occasioned by famine, the policy of the Company was wholly visionary,

Impossibility of giving relief efficiently.

Government adopting for the first time on public works, of later times. In a question of the most opening of works near the Government, which has repeatedly even now to be concluded.

First attempt to relieve distress by public works.

enlarged by the larger scale on which by further progress towards formulating the principles on which the administration of relief ought to be based. It was accepted as the general rule for apportioning responsibilities of the Government and the public with regard to relief, that to offering employment to the able-bodied, while the duties of the Government belonged to the helpless and infirm attached, as in ordinary times, to the care of the public. This doctrine, with modifications, re-appeared on various subsequent occasions, was distinctly reaffirmed by the Orissa Famine Commissioners, and has been in quite recent times been affirmed in favour of the view that the State cannot vest itself by delegation to others of the responsibility of providing the necessary relief for every class of a famine-stricken population, including that class which is only the most helpless.

Relief measures adopted in 1837-8.

More elaborate measures in 1860-1.

Failure of  
the adminis-  
tration in  
Orissa in  
1865-6.

of famine relief administration, and is justly regarded as having contributed largely towards the more adequate fulfilment of this class of State obligation.

92. In Bengal a long immunity from famine had encouraged a belief in the improbability of its occurrence, and had left the local officers without any direct experience as to the proper methods of relief. The province of Orissa, to which neither nature nor art had supplied the means of constant communication, found itself in 1865, on the almost total failure of its rice crops, suddenly devoid of sustenance, and a very large mortality ensued before the tardy action of the Government afforded any material assistance. The results of this calamitous season concentrated public attention on the disastrous nature of Indian famines, and the inadequacy of the means available for counteracting them. The events of that and the following year proved with lan- guage of distinctness that neither the Government nor the local administration possessed an adequate knowledge of the facts or the appliances necessary to offer relief with promptness and efficacy.

Increased  
activity in  
1868-9.

93. The painful lesson taught by this calamity sank deep into the minds alike of the rulers of the country and of the English public, and its results were apparent in the administration of the famine, which three years afterwards visited the North-Western Provinces, and still more in that which in 1873-4 was experienced in Behar. In 1868 every district officer in the North-Western Provinces was reminded that "he would be held personally responsible if any death occurred from starvation which could have been avoided by any arrangement." "of his subordinates," and an "every large scale was incurred in the measures adopted by the Government employment and relief of the population."

Energetic  
efforts made  
for relief in  
1873-4.

94. These influences were memories of Orissa led to the avail, no such effects should whole energies of the Government the command of the State considerations were subordinate obviating mortality; life of unusual brevity an expenditure of about 6 in the previous famines

Financial  
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95. These results brought with reference to future came to the conclusion to enter into its calculations a year, so that the expenses must certainly be large—she of the country, and thus to the

More serious  
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effect of the  
famine of  
1876-7.

96. It was in these circumstances that the Government found itself when the drought of 1876 came upon Southern India. The great magnitude of the difficulty to be met became apparent before the end of that year; a calamity had to be faced, which, judging from the area affected and the completeness of the failure of the harvests, seemed likely to exceed in gravity anything that had occurred in the present century. With the experience of 1873-4 fresh in their memories the Government conveyed to their officers engaged in conducting the measures of relief a warning as to the extreme importance of guarding against wasteful expenditure. The prudence of such a caution was shown by the fact that in consequence of the long duration of the famine and the extensive area over which it spread, the direct outlay on relief eventually reached the sum of nearly 8 millions, thus raising the whole amount spent in five years between 1873 and 1878 to no less than 17 millions sterling, besides about 1½ millions lent to Native States to assist them in carrying out measures of relief.

Modification  
of relief  
principles  
adopted in  
Behar.

97. It is a matter of notoriety that an impression had become widely prevalent in India that the desire to afford proper relief to all distress in the Behar famine had led to a lavish expenditure by Government in the importation of grain, and to some relaxation of the precautions without which all relief, and especially that which is gratuitous, is liable to be misapplied. Though it was not directly so declared, there can be no doubt that the advisers of the Government of India were influenced by these views. More particularly, the considerations which had, in the case of Behar, been held to justify the purchase of grain by the direct agency of the State in order to supply the requirements of the population affected by the scarcity, were decided not to be applicable to the circumstances of Southern India, and the movement made in this direction at Madras was at once stopped.



98. The result of these convictions was a declaration by the Government that while on the one hand no effort should be spared, consistently with the resources of the State, to prevent deaths from famine, on the other it could not undertake to prevent all suffering and to give general relief to the poorer classes of the community. The mission of Sir Richard Temple to the distressed districts, there to confer with the local authorities and to offer his advice, insured uniformity of action, as far as circumstances admitted, of the experience obtained in Behar and subsequently, as Governor of the Presidency. It is understood that in the famine of 1876-77 in that province the Government adopted in Behar in 1873-74; and it does not appear that the theory of the relief followed in Bombay differed materially from those principles, though in practice important modifications arose from the actual conditions of the policy of leaving the supply of food grain to the ordinary operations of the market, and from the greater anxiety shown to avoid profusion of expenditure and to secure the useful application of labour.

General enforcement of those principles.

99. The experience of 1876-77 led out of the financial policy initiated necessary outlay for famine relief and provision was accordingly made in

affirmation and more complete carrying out of regarding the liability to meet the debt provided for from annual income, and the re-adjustment of the public income to £1½ millions sterling to discharge this debt, as a pledge of the recognition by the Government of the Government of the Government of the Government commensurate with the wants of the Government from which such relief may be obtained whenever the necessity arises.

Financial provision for meeting the cost of the famine.

the people, has at the same time  
henceforth afforded with confidence

100. The sums spent in 1873-74, 1874-5, and 1875-6, are very much larger than anything before thought necessary to justify the fear that famine relief will hereafter be a cause of severe famines as a rule affect India, if it be remembered that are naturally exempt or have been considerable portions of the country are emergencies are of rare occurrence in them, and that such great intervals of years commonly elapsing between the severest famines. It is probable that period between such as that which was considered to be the causes of large outlay, avoided in the future, and that in 1873, may most likely be required, in others economy, increased expenditure may be required, in others economy, application of means to the end in view. Taking the figures as indicating the probable maximum number of persons affected in the famine for an average time of one year to be 2½ millions, and reckoning the charge per head, including all contingencies, as not likely to exceed 50 rupees, or £12½ millions sterling. But such extreme cases would be of rare occurrence, and the average numbers for a series of years would be far less, not amounting to more than 250,000 yearly. This estimate is obtained from the calculation that the average number affected annually in India is, as shown in para. 72, one fifty-fourth of the entire population, or 4½ millions; and of this, four-fifths, or 3½ millions, are British subjects. Taking 7 per cent. (as in para. 75) of the affected population to be the proportion that stand in need of relief measures, the number to be supported on an average for one year will be 245,000; and the cost of their support at 5l. a head would involve a yearly average charge of £1¼ millions. Considering the doubts that must necessarily surround any such estimates, the accordance of the sum thus obtained with the 1½ millions adopted by the Government of India in 1878 seems to justify the belief that this last-named amount is not likely to be exceeded as the average charge for famine relief over a series of years. This sum of 1½ millions per annum roughly approximates to ½ per cent. on the value of what we estimate (in para. 155) to be the average annual outlay of food grain in the country.

Famine relief  
no cause of  
financial em-  
barrassment.

101. On a consideration of the measures adopted for the relief of past famines it seems impossible to declare that the procedure followed in the treatment of any one of them was altogether successful, or such as should be entirely accepted as a precedent for future guidance. We cannot doubt that the measures taken in the famine of 1873-74,—though they must be recognized as successful so far as the absence of mortality can be received as a test,—exceeded the necessities of the case, but in default of precise information as to the loss caused by the drought, both taken absolutely and in comparison with the loss on other occasions, it is impossible to estimate the degree in which the adoption of a different set of measures would have produced a different result from that which actually occurred. Regarding the famine of

No former procedure as to famine relief to be altogether regarded as a precedent.

1876-78, it can scarcely be asserted that the system adopted was altogether satisfactory or efficient; nor is it possible to say precisely in what degree the calamity was susceptible of mitigation. So great are the necessary uncertainties which surround such matters, that opinions may reasonably differ as to the relative or absolute extent and severity of the different scarcities, as to the actual number of deaths properly attributable to famine or want, and as to the extent to which the intervention of Government really led to saving of life, or in which administrative mismanagement resulted in suffering and mortality, which might have been prevented under a better system.

But principles can be laid down based on past experience.

Want of diversity of occupations in India.

102. But this negative conclusion need not interfere with the practical utility of the inquiry on which we are engaged. Our task is, by careful consideration both of the shortcomings and successes of the past, to ascertain and lay down the general principles of a sound and efficient system of relief; and we find no serious difficulty in coming to conclusions in this sense which we generally approve and submit for the consideration of the Government.

103. A main cause of the disastrous consequences of Indian famines, and one of the greatest difficulties in the way of providing relief in an effectual shape, is to be found in the fact that the great mass of the population directly depends on agriculture, and that there is no other industry from which any considerable part of the community derives its support. The failure of the usual rain thus deprives the labouring class, as a whole, not only of the ordinary supplies of food obtainable at prices within their reach, but of the sole ~~means of procuring~~ by which they can earn the means of procuring food. The complete remedy for this condition of things will be found only in the development of industries other than agriculture and independent of the fluctuations of the seasons. With a population so dense as that of India these considerations are of the greatest weight, and they are rendered still more serious by the fact that the numbers who have no other employment than agriculture are a large part of the country greatly in excess of what is really required for the cultivation of the land. So far as this is the case, the result must be that the requirements of a more advanced industry of the country for material progress is

Effects of density of the population.

104. This density of population, most productive as it is, affords proof that the conditions of life are less than is often supposed. The districts of India, as compared with those of Europe, can hardly be otherwise accounted for the requirements of human life in India. It would be to compare the physical conditions enjoyed by one of the sallowest of the human race with those of a robust and healthy man. Probably be greatly in favour of the former, but the subject is too great a risk. To the ease with which the wants of the population progress in all the arts which physical discomfort, and which of what is termed civilization employed population in which slower accumulation of nation

Obligation of the State to give relief in time of famine.

105. The precise circumstances under which the resources of the State must differ in different obligations is governed by the conditions which places it beyond the reach of an efficacious remedy otherwise. The intervention of the State can be no doubt that a calamity arising from causes wholly beyond the ordinary food supply of the country, is one which in the ordinary power of resistance. Accordingly becomes a paramount duty of the State to give all practicable assistance to the people in time of famine, and to devote all its available resources to the relief of the

though greatest in the districts which are most from drought, is yet generally such as to check the increase of numbers is less than the density of the population of the richest rural districts of corresponding tracts in Europe, can hardly be the greater ease with which the immediate needs and warmth—are satisfied in the climate of the limits of our present inquiry to attempt the effort of an average Indian peasant with those of Northern Europe, but the advantage would probably be in favour of the former, though his life may be shorter and is the advantage of the Indian peasant in respect to the ease with which the wants of the population are met is, doubtless, due to his relatively slower progress in all the arts which physical discomfort, and which of what is termed civilization employed population in which slower accumulation of nation

under which it becomes right and necessary that relief be applied to the relief of want or suffering, but the general conditions by which the relief is to be these: (1), that the calamity shall be one of an individual to obtain the requisite relief or with the aid of the State; and (2), that the relief to produce a practically beneficial result. There are such as famine, exceptional in its nature and arising from an external control, which deprives an entire population of its ordinary employments of the wage-earning classes, is one which in the ordinary power of resistance. Accordingly becomes a paramount duty of the State to give all practicable assistance to the people in time of famine, and to devote all its available resources to the relief of the



Government stands in the place of landlord to the agriculturists, who form the great mass of the population. We need not entangle ourselves in vain speculations as to the point at which the consequences of giving relief on some imaginary scale of magnitude would become a more grievous evil to the country than the destruction that would follow if famine were left without relief, or with relief known to be insufficient. No such alternative is at all events at present before us.

106. It is, however, desirable to point out that an obligation such as that above stated cannot be confined to the protection of the community against the loss of life or the extreme suffering consequent on famine, but necessarily extends to the provision of similar help against other calamities, such as the destruction caused by the inundations which attend cyclones, by great epidemics, or other causes of suffering and mortality. As the gradual enlargement of the scale of relief in time of famine has followed on the more complete recognition of the possibility of meeting the evil, so, no doubt, will it be with respect to these other visitations. In the fulness of time it may be hoped that sanitary and other precautions will take a more prominent place among the practical measures by which the community protects itself against various destructive agencies, some of which are hardly less deadly than famine, though the form which they assume may be less apparent and may produce less effect on the imagination.

Obligation extends to the giving relief against other great calamities.

To secure compliance with the second condition, which prescribes that the administration of relief must be restricted. The British administration, with all the appliances of civilization and science at its command, has in many respects fundamentally changed the position of the people for the better; it has put a check on some of the great causes of mortality at work among them, it has provided many estimable advantages, and has added much to the power of the community to improve their condition. It must be remembered, however, that all these advantages tend at the same time to favour the increase of the population, and to the pressure on the means of subsistence. It becomes, therefore, especially important that the Government, when it has to deal with calamities such as famine, should so frame its measures as to avoid every tendency to relax in the people the sense of the obligation which rests on them to provide for their own support by their own labour, and to employ the surplus of years of plenty to meet the wants of years of scarcity. The great object of famine relief is not only to prevent the all too common consequence of ill-directed and excessive distribution of charitable relief, but to preserve the private habits of thrift and self-reliance, which are the result of years of plenty to meet the wants of years of scarcity. It is in fact far better to give life and giving protection than to give relief, and in fact will be far better than demoralization which all and excessive distribution of charitable relief.

Necessity of administering famine relief so as not to check thrift and self-reliance.

108. The structure of Indian society is, in some respects, admirably adapted for common effort against a common misfortune. The ordinary form of life in the Hindu family makes each individual a member of a corporate body, in whose possessions, rights, and duties he participates, and to which he is legally entitled to look for assistance in time of need. Even where the legal right does not exist, the moral obligation of mutual assistance is scarcely less distinctly recognized. Apart from family ties, there are other relationships, such as those of landlord and tenant, master and servant, employer of agricultural labour and employed, alms-giver and alms-receiver, which are of the utmost importance in binding the social fabric together, and enabling it to resist any ordinary strain. There are, too, salutary habits of frugality and foresight, the precious result of traditional experience, which have an all-important bearing upon the power of Indian society to pass comparatively unscathed through periods of dearth. Any form of relief calculated to bring these rights into obscurity or desuetude, or to break down these habits by showing them to be superfluous, would be an incalculable misfortune. In the same way anything which diminishes the reluctance which the people exhibit to accept public charity, and the eagerness with which at the earliest opportunity they recur to their own unaided labour for support, would be a certain cause of future grave evil.

Or impair the structure of society.

109. The first effect of drought is to diminish greatly, and at last to stop, all field labour, and to throw out of employment the great mass of people who live on the wages of such labour. A similar effect is produced next upon the artisans, the small shop-keepers, and traders, first in villages and country towns and later on in the larger towns also, by depriving them of their profits, which are mainly dependent on dealings with the least wealthy classes; and lastly, all classes become less able to give charitable help to public beggars, and to support their dependants. Each of the agricultural

The classes that suffer from famine.

classes as possess a proprietary interest in the land, or a valuable right of occupancy in it, do not as a rule require to be protected against starvation in time of famine unless the calamity is unusually severe and prolonged, as they generally are provided with stocks of food or money, or have credit with money-lenders. But those who, owning only a small plot of land, eke out by its profits their wages as labourers, and rack-rented tenants-at-will living almost from hand to mouth, are only a little way removed from the class of field labour. They possess no credit, and on them pressure soon begins. Thus the classes who are earliest in point of time to feel the need of relief are (1) the actually landless smallest proprietors or occupiers; (2) men and small traders; (3) infirm persons who live on the wages of labour, and the necessity of the public or of individuals; and (4) the dependants of all persons who reason of their own distress can no longer support them. These classes again fall into two chief categories: (1) those who are accustomed and able to perform work of one sort; and (2) those who from any cause are incapable of labour.

How to ascertain the proper objects of State aid.

110. Such being the general character of calamity to be met, and of the classes which the proper recipients of the public charity can be most effectually relieved, the problem to be solved is how to avoid the risk of indiscriminate profusion on the one hand, and of insufficient and niggardly assistance on the other. The problem is how to relieve all who really need relief, and to waste as little public money as possible in the process. In England, the system of public charity has been considered that the best way to secure relief is to place the responsibility upon those who have to pay for it, and who from their position are in the best position to judge in each particular case whether relief is really needed. In India, or could, in the case of a disastrous failure. Against this system, numerous and efficient inquiries have been made, admitting or rejecting relief, and dealing not with limits but with the actual needs of the people. At its command, however, the Government has to the task of ascertaining the necessities of so great a multitude. Nor again is it possible to assign a subordinate agency without proper supervision of its members. Such a system is no less than a certain broad self-acting system, irrespective of any other system.

Labour test.

\*Turgot.

The main principles of famine relief.

111. The chief of these principles, desirable to enforce, is the principle of labour commensurate in each case with the necessities of the labourer's powers, in return for which he is to receive relief. This system is applicable to all classes of the population; it affords the best method of procuring for the State a useful return for its expenditure, and it avoids the demoralising influences of purely eleemosynary aid. It requires, as will be seen hereafter, to be accompanied by a system of relief for those who are able to work, we can feel no doubt that it is the safest and most efficacious form of State help, and that, to use the language of a great administrator of famine relief in modern times, "the best and most useful kind of alms is that which puts in providing means of earning them." The great bulk of the applicants for relief, if being thus provided for, we believe that it will be possible for an efficient staff of officers to control with success the grant of relief, on the basis of personal inspection and knowledge of the individual circumstances of each applicant, among the comparatively small numbers of destitute persons to whom the test of labour cannot be applied.

112. The following are the principal rules of action which we consider are most likely to conduce to the most efficient administration of relief in times of famine:—

I. To lay down a definite system of procedure, to be embodied in a famine code, which the Local Government will carry out, subject only to financial control on the part of the Government of India. At the same time to provide, by the aid of a special department of the Government, an improved system of recording information

on subjects connected with famines, and of collecting and dealing with the statistical returns relating to the weather, the agriculture, the health, and the well-being of the people, and thus to secure the most prompt and accurate knowledge attainable of a probable failure of crops, and of the extent and consequences of any failure that actually takes place. Further, to concentrate the control of the various branches of the Administration concerned in famine relief, and to render their action more efficient.

II. To provide for the offer of employment at the cost of the State to persons capable of work and deprived of the means of earning their livelihood by reason of drought, such employment being offered in time to secure them against the danger of falling into an enfeebled condition through want, and being adapted to the capacity of the labourers.

III. Simultaneously to offer gratuitous relief, as far as possible, in their villages, or, if the case shall so require, in poor-houses to persons who in such times are left without the means of support, and are any cause incapable of providing for themselves; attention being given to the importance of avoiding anything that may tend to weaken the coherence of the village community, of working through the village officers or head men, where such authorities exist, and of making use of any available local help for superintending the relief operations.

IV. To organise a suitable system of village inspection and control, through which the condition of the country, and the efficiency of the measures of relief may be ascertained, and defects brought to light and corrected, and the people encouraged to avail themselves of the measures offered.

V. To maintain a policy of non-interference with the ordinary operations of trade unless in some very exceptional condition of affairs there may be evidence that without such interference the supply of food will be maintained; but to keep a constant watch over the food supply of the people in case of threatened or actual scarcity, and to remove any impediments in the way of free movement of trade; measures being also taken in anticipation of any need to extend and improve to the utmost, and in all parts of the country, the means of communication on which the distribution of the food depends, those means of irrigation by which its production may be profitably increased and maintained.

VI. To grant aid to the landless and lower classes in the following ways:  
First, to relax the demand for land revenue in time of widespread loss of the harvest, suspending it freely in proportion to the extent of that loss, on the condition that a proportionate relief be granted to tenants and cultivators who hold subordinate rights in the land:

Secondly, to give loans to small landed proprietors who are in need of such assistance, and also to the proprietors who may be trusted to apply the money usefully.

VII. To lay down with precision the limits within which the principle of local responsibility for meeting expenditure on relief shall be applied to provincial governments; and to require the municipal authorities in towns, and the local committees in the districts, to co-operate in carrying out relief measures for the local population.

#### I.—Improved Administration and Statistics.

113. Every Government which has administered measures in time of famine has felt the need of issuing general orders, both to secure uniformity of system and to avoid the risks that would arise from any other officers not possessing personal experience of this particular kind of work. The best orders of this description were promulgated from time to time as occasion required, but of late years there has been a tendency to bring them into the form of a permanent code of instructions, and in more than one province such a body of rules has been drawn up. It is certainly desirable that a further step should now be taken in this direction. The duties involved in relief measures are complicated and various; their successful performance necessitates the utilisation of large stores of accumulated experience and a carefully considered and prepared plan; they cannot be safely left to individual energy and resource, or be dealt with by an improvised system when the emergency has arisen. Prompt and decided action in carrying out these measures is of primary importance, and by considering beforehand the principles that should guide them, much of that hesitation and uncertainty of purpose, which have been found to be so detrimental in the past, will be avoided in future. We recommend, therefore, that the Government of India should, as far as possible, issue

A famine code to be prepared.

a set of rules embodying the main principles that should govern the administration of famine relief, and that these rules should be authoritative in all parts of British India. The broad principles being thus fixed, it would be the duty of the several local Governments to apply them by drawing up a famine code, containing detailed instructions suitable to the varying wants and administrative systems of the different provinces, and embracing, as far as human foresight can go, all matters falling within the scope of relief administration. We append to this report a draft of the rules which we suggest for the adoption of the Government of India, and a model of such a code. The latter will no doubt require modification to meet local peculiarities, but will, we trust, be of great use, since its clauses contain the pith of all the valuable suggestions that have been made to us. The local codes of famine relief should be laid before the Supreme Government, and when they have received its sanction the local Governments should be left free to act upon them, whenever occasion arises, without the necessity of any fresh reference as to matters for which provision has been made, just as they apply other rules of administration. The entire responsibility should rest upon them that everything is done that is needful in the matter of giving relief, and that as far as the State can prevent it, no one shall be allowed to die for want of food, the only control retained by the Government of India over their measures (other than the general power of correcting errors) being the financial check over expenditure, and over the means adopted to supply the necessary funds.

Financial  
control.

114. Such a control as this it is clearly essential to retain. So long as the cost of relief is not wholly charged against local resources, it would be impossible to permit any one province to incur on its sole authority large expenditure, to meet which it would need the help of the rest of British India, without the supervision and knowledge of the Supreme Government, which alone can impose burdens on the general taxpayer. Even if it be hereafter thought desirable to provide locally, wholly or in part, the funds required for famine relief, the same principles that govern the raising of loans or taxation for ordinary purposes of administration must be applied to this case. The limits of local authority in the matter of spending money for relief, and the occasions on which reference must be made for sanction or assistance to the Government of India, should therefore be clearly defined at the outset.

Necessity of  
a separate  
Department,

115. It is not to be anticipated that any system of measures could now be framed which would secure all that is wanted in the future. What is desired is that the experience dearly bought in the past may, as far as possible, be rendered available as a guide for the future, and that a system may be established on which may be engrafted any improvements of practice which the changed condition of the country or prolonged experience may hereafter indicate to be desirable. The administration of famine relief would therefore be more effectually carried out and controlled if the measures it requires, instead of being started afresh as each occasion arises in the manner which at the moment seems most convenient, were not only conducted on a well-considered and prearranged plan, but also were placed definitely and permanently under some special branch of the secretariat, both in the Government of India and in the local Governments. Such an office in each province would have charge of all the records of past famines, and take note of all that is being usefully done or learnt in neighbouring provinces, so that the gathered results of past experience might be collected and made accessible, which has hitherto been hardly possible. Through this office should be brought together the more comprehensive and exact record of the agricultural, vital, and economic condition of the people, to the urgent necessity of which we have already drawn attention. Especially when a famine is thought to be impending would such an office become important, as it would supply the Government with all statistics bearing on this subject, and would be responsible for working out from them the conclusions on which the decision as to future action would mainly rest. When a famine is in progress, all the information relating to relief measures, their extent, their cost, their results, would be collected in it and presented in a uniform and intelligible manner, and through it all orders of the local Government relating to famine administration would be issued. A corresponding branch of the secretariat of the Government of India would occupy a similar position in relation to the Viceroy and his Council, as regards collecting and recording information, advising the Supreme Government, and conveying orders to the local Governments.

To be called  
the Agricultural  
Department.

116. The creation of such offices would not necessarily involve any great increase of expenditure; much of the work to be done in ordinary years is now scattered over several offices, and would merely have to be concentrated in one; while the needful

expansion in time of famine would be provided, as is now done, by adding temporarily to their strength as long as unusual exertion is required. As the duties to be discharged in ordinary times would mainly consist in the collection of facts relating to the condition of the agricultural community, and the agricultural produce of the country, they would almost as a matter of necessity fall within the province of an Agricultural Department, and as we are of opinion that such a department should be organised under all the Governments, we shall hereafter speak of the special office we have suggested by the name of the Agricultural Department.

117. The recurrence of famine being an event altogether exceptional in its character, and taking place at irregular and often greatly prolonged intervals, we consider that the performance of the duties that fall upon the Government in relation to it must be entrusted to one of the departments charged with the ordinary machinery of administration, and the most suitable of these would be the Agricultural Department. For the same reason the administration of the measures for famine relief must mainly devolve on the ordinary establishment appointed to carry out the normal work of government in the country, and not on any special organization expressly created for the purpose; and what must be aimed at is a system which may be worked by the ordinary official staff, supplemented when necessary to meet the special circumstances of the case.

Organisation  
for famine  
relief.

118. Experience has shown that the measures required to meet occasions of severe famine fall under so many heads and require the co-operation of so many officers in different departments of the Government, that much injury to the public interests has often arisen from want of a central authority by which the varied requirements of relief on a large scale can be considered in relation to one another, and uniformity of action secured. The gradual expansion of the measures of relief of late years, and the recognition of the liability to provide for all classes of the community in all parts of a tract suffering from famine, have left it no longer doubtful that in future, when such a calamity occurs on a large scale, a special officer should be nominated, who might be called the Famine Commissioner, in whom should be centred the responsibility for directing all branches of famine relief, under the immediate orders of the head of the local Government, and in immediate connection with its Agricultural Department. Such an officer should be specially selected for his energy and general aptitude for administration; he should, if possible, have had previous experience of famines; and he should possess the entire confidence of the local Government, so that in every case of emergency he may act without hesitation, in the full knowledge that he may expect support. He should exercise constant supervision with a view to securing uniformity and efficiency in the manner in which the code of instructions is being followed. He should be ready to move at any moment to any place where his presence is called for to originate measures of relief, to correct errors, or to meet unforeseen difficulties; and by aid of suitable reports by letter or telegraph should keep himself thoroughly informed of the whole course of events, and maintain his confidential accord with the head of the Government. The orders of the Government on all relief measures should issue under his name, and arrangements should be made to ensure their reaching the local executive officers with the least possible amount of official routine likely to cause delay, all needful care at the same time being taken to provide for their being thoroughly understood by the responsible supervising authorities.

Appointment  
of a Famine  
Commissioner.

119. That relief operations in a period of extreme famine will try the administrative staff to the utmost is certain, and in proportion as the officers who compose it are energetic and intelligent will be the probable measure of their success. On such occasions the local Government should not hesitate to make whatever distribution of the officers at their disposal will be likely to lead to the best general results, and to subordinate all other considerations, however deserving they might be of attention in quieter times, to doing what will conduce most to the preservation of the people from the dangers of famine. The district officers should, on the approach of famine, apply themselves to study vigilantly the condition of the people, putting aside all less important duties which may interfere with the attainment of this object, and taking any steps that may be suitable towards procuring the fullest information by visiting the threatened or affected localities, making personal inquiries from the most intelligent inhabitants, and arranging for rapid, uninterrupted communication with the subordinate officials and native gentlemen. At the same time it should be the care of the Government to strengthen the hands of their district officers by a staff of special assistants proportioned to the exigencies of the case, and

Special  
activity  
required.



as far as practicable to place the most energetic and efficient officers in charge of the districts or areas where famine is most severe. In the same way the officers of the Public Works Department placed in charge of relief works should be selected not only for their capacity as engineers, but also on a consideration of their knowledge of and sympathy with the people, and their powers of organization under peculiar and trying circumstances. The Commissioners of Revenue and other superior supervising staff of all departments should in like manner redouble their watchfulness, and take special care that while they assist all subordinate to them with their advice they avoid all causes of delay in the communications which pass between the Government and the local executive officers. It should be one of the most important duties of the Famine Commissioner to see that no officer is allowed to remain in charge of any branch of the relief operations, whether in duties of supervision or in immediate management of work, or otherwise, under whom, whether from misconception or incapacity of any kind, bodily or mental, the administration of relief is not successfully carried on; and the Government should fully support his action in this respect. It is moreover of great importance that the civil administration of the country should be so arranged that the local areas which form the units of executive authority should not be so great as to exceed the power of a single person to control effectually, and the reduction of districts to a moderate size is on this account most desirable. Any other administrative improvement which will strengthen the sense of responsibility among the executive district officers, simplify their communications with the superior controlling authority, remove friction, and expedite the transaction of business, should be sought for and carried out.

Co-operation of all departments.

120. But, apart from demands arising in relation to direct measures of relief, unusual strain will almost certainly be placed on many branches of the administration by the occurrence of severe famine. Such a time will necessarily be one of financial pressure calling for special caution in every province; additional attention will be required to the preservation of order, lest the suffering population should be driven by want to commit acts of violence. The medical and sanitary officers of Government should be especially busy in inspecting the condition of all persons in need of relief, and even in the districts not seriously affected watchfulness will be needed in respect to the public health. The dependence of an uninterrupted food supply on the efficiency of the local means of communication must not be lost sight of, and the railway administration throughout the country must be closely watched to see that all possible facilities are given for the importation and distribution of grain by their means. Where irrigation is practised from works managed by the Government increased care will be essential to secure the utilization to the utmost of the available water supply for the preservation of the food crops and for their extension as far as possible. On some of these points further remarks will be made in a subsequent part of our report, and here it is only necessary to add that a period of severe drought and famine in any part of India should be an occasion when those provinces which are exempt from the calamity should be ready to contribute all their resources to give any assistance that may be required.

Need of improved agricultural, vital, and economic statistics.

Reform among the village accountants.

\* App. No. III.

121. The efficiency of such a special department as we have proposed will depend mainly on the completeness and accuracy with which the agricultural, vital, and economic statistics with which it has to deal are collected in each village, and compiled in each sub-division and district throughout the country.

122. With regard to agricultural statistics, we have shown elsewhere\* what amount of information can at present be collected from the existing data, and what are the defects in the data, and in the method of preparing them. The revenue system in the greater part of British India is such as to present unrivalled means of ascertaining in the fullest manner all necessary facts relating to agriculture, and to the different incidents of landed tenures in every village; but those means have nowhere been completely utilised or made as efficient as they might be. We recommend that the body of village accountants should everywhere be put on a sound and satisfactory footing as responsible public officers, with a clearly defined set of duties, but with due consideration to the importance of their permanent connexion with their own villages; and that where, as in parts of Bengal and Sindh, the class has ceased to exist through long desuetude, it should be resuscitated. Officials of this class should be appointed for all villages, whether the estates are free from assessment, or pay a quitrent, or pay the land revenue in full; and the same annual returns should be prepared for all kinds of estates, whether under the permanent or temporary settlement. The field survey, which supplies the basis of all agricultural statistics, should be pushed on

in the provinces where it is now in progress, and should be set on foot in Bengal, where hitherto it has not been introduced. In that province the expenditure, or the major part of it, should be borne by the landholders, who alone derive advantage from the increasing value of the land, and who cannot without such a survey properly perform the duties imposed on them by their position.

123. Over the village accountants there should be a staff of active subordinate officers, employed in keeping them to their duty, inspecting their work, visiting each village in turn, and checking the accuracy of all the items recorded concerning it.

Supervisors  
of village  
accountants.

124. Above these there should be a special officer in every district who would be, as a rule, of the rank of a deputy collector, and whose main or only duty should be to take charge of all matters connected with the economic condition and well-being of the people. He would test and compile the agricultural returns and examine the market prices, and ascertain from these and other data the relative value of each year's crop, according as it is below or above the average. From such a continuous record of the harvests he would obtain data for judging whether the landed classes were in a depressed or a prosperous condition, and how far they were prepared to meet a calamitous season. It would be his object to obtain similar information as to all sections of the population, and to learn what are the causes of depression, and what classes would be the first to succumb under the pressure of scarcity and high prices. The accurate registration of vital statistics and the investigation of the causes of any abnormal mortality would lie within his province, and he would be the agent of the health officer of the district for the purpose of scrutinizing the record of births and deaths. The extent of the food stocks, the ebb and flow of local trade, the current rates of interest charged on loans to different classes, the deficient or superabundant supply of any kinds of labour, and the customary wages paid to each kind—these and other kindred topics, on which information is at present far from precise, would fall within the scope of his inquiries. These officers, while generally subordinate to the collector or chief officer of the district in which they are placed, would be specially under the orders of the Agricultural Department, in respect to the system on which their returns are to be prepared and checked.

Special  
officers in  
each district  
to supervise  
statistics.

125. A Director of Agriculture should be appointed in each province as executive head of this department, chosen for his knowledge of the condition of the people, and particularly of the agricultural classes. He would directly control the special statistical officers, and would be the adviser of the local Government on all matters relating to agriculture and statistics. In ordinary times he should discharge these duties and superintend all measures designed to improve the agriculture of the country; and in times of famine he would be the officer responsible for warning the Government as to the agricultural outlook, and for preparing such a forecast as should guide it in issuing instructions, and setting on foot measures of relief. A corresponding officer should perform analogous duties under the Government of India, assisting it in its dealings with the local Governments in the Agricultural Department, and in the supervision of the local Directors of Agriculture. All these officials, and a certain proportion of the special officers in each district, should have been prepared for their duties by a technical training in scientific and practical agriculture. A more detailed consideration of the measures that we suggest for attaining this end, and for originating and stimulating improvements in agriculture, will be found in another part of this report.

The Director  
of Agriculture.

## II.—*Provision of Relief for the Able-bodied.*

126. The ordinary position of the country in seasons of scarcity is that, the population being for the most part engaged in agriculture, and a large section being dependent on the wages of field labour, paid either in money or in kind, a drought which more or less completely destroys the crops, somewhat in the same proportion deprives the labouring class of their usual occupation and means of subsistence. The result ensues in part directly from the fact that field labour has become useless or impracticable, and to some extent indirectly from the fact that the employers of labour lose their ordinary means of paying wages, which are derived from their produce in possession or in prospect. The stores of grain held by the landowners are in such seasons much more strictly retained for their personal wants; and the price of food rises to two or three times its ordinary rate, so that, even if the usual wage were obtainable, it would be insufficient to support life.

The first  
effect of  
drought is  
to



Duty of the State to come forward as an employer of labour.

127. In such circumstances it becomes necessary for the State to replace for the moment, as far as may be needed, the ordinary employers of labour, and to furnish work and the wages for work to the labouring classes, with a view to enabling them to earn a livelihood so long as their ordinary occupations are necessarily interrupted. The relief thus given should be tendered promptly, and before the people have begun to lose strength from want of food, and the needful steps should be taken to induce all destitute persons able to work to come to the places where employment is offered them as early as possible. It will at the same time be necessary to see that the cost to which the community as a whole is put by the employment of persons in want is no more than the case strictly requires.

Nature and locality of the relief-works.

128. The employment thus offered by the State can hardly be other than some form of simple labour, such as is required on the ordinary public works carried on under the officers of the Public Works Department. The works selected should be of permanent utility and capable of employing a considerable number of persons (a large proportion of whom would be unskilled labourers) for a considerable period of time. Their position must be regulated by various circumstances, to all of which proper weight should be given, such as convenience of access to the distressed population, facilities for the provision of food and for supervision, and healthiness of situation. The selection of these works should be the duty of the Public Works Department in each presidency or province, acting under the orders of the local Government, and that Department should be held responsible for keeping a list of such works ready to be put in hand without delay when any such emergency occurs. If possible one such work should be opened in each sub-division of a district in which severe distress prevails. It is not necessary, and may often be undesirable, to offer to every one work close to his door, but on the other hand it is unreasonable to expect people to travel great distances in order to obtain relief, or to make such a journey a condition precedent of their being received on relief works; and we think that such a test should not be applied.

Management of relief-works.

129. The immediate direction of these works should be entrusted to the officers of the Public Works Department, whose special training best qualifies them for such a duty, and who would be responsible for enforcing discipline and directing the labour. It is to be clearly understood by these officers that their duty is not, as in ordinary times, to get the greatest quantity of work done at the cheapest rate, but to give effectual relief to the labouring population, inasmuch as the work is undertaken not for its own sake but for the sake of the people employed on it. Labourers of all kinds and of all degrees of working capacity and working power should be received on these works if they apply for admission, and civil officers should be appointed to co-operate with the Public Works officers in classifying the labourers and seeing that they are properly paid and tasked according to their strength. The other duties of the civil district officers will be so numerous and important that it is not expedient that the ordinary relief-works should be carried on by them, unless in the case of the Public Works Department being unable to supply officers for that purpose. Work might, however, be carried on under the Civil officers for the purpose of giving employment to persons who have been in the receipt of gratuitous relief, and who, though beginning to recover from debility, are not yet strong enough to be sent off finally to the regular relief works.

Position of the collector in relation to the Public Works staff.

130. The collector of the district should exercise general supervision over all works, as over all other arrangements for giving relief within his district, and should be responsible to Government for their efficiency. Pending reference to the Government or other superior authority, his decision should be accepted by the Public Works officers in all matters relating to the task and wage of the people employed, as well as to opening or closing works, and generally in everything except arrangements of a merely technical nature.

131. It has been proved by experience that when there is little to do in the fields, large numbers of people are apt to flock to get employment on Government works though there is not any such general need as to justify the offer of work to all comers. This is particularly the case if the task is light and discipline slack, and too easy terms may even have the effect of drawing labour from its legitimate sphere, and discouraging the continuance or resumption of ordinary agricultural occupations. It is therefore necessary that proper discipline should be maintained, and that, though all applicants should be received, certain self-acting tests of wage and labour should be enforced to prevent the relief work from being so light or unduly attractive as to induce any to remain who are not really in want. The wage should be adjusted from time to

time so as to provide sufficient food for the labourer's support, allowing him one day's rest in the week ; and separate rates should be prescribed suitable for the various classes of persons as well as for different ages and sexes. A margin should be left with the view of giving security against accidental error on the side of deficiency, not with the view of providing the labourer with the power of saving, and care should be taken that penalties for wilful idleness, in the form of deductions from the wage, should not be so large or so often repeated as to have the effect of reducing the food of the labourer below what is necessary for subsistence. The wage should be paid if possible daily, otherwise at intervals of not more than three or four days, and the payment should be superintended by a thoroughly trustworthy officer. The labour would be a task fixed according to the capabilities of the labourers, who should be divided into suitable classes for this purpose, and care should be taken to classify and employ them so as not to break up families, which should as far as practicable be enabled to work together. In apportioning the task, the fact that a large proportion of the labourers are doing unaccustomed work, that many may be physically and morally depressed, and that the disruption of their ordinary life, and the novelty of their position on relief-works probably act injuriously on their bodily powers, should be borne in mind. The full task demanded from such persons should not be more than 75 per cent. of that commonly performed by labourers in ordinary times, and from the less capable labourers a still smaller task should be required.

132. The contract system in its ordinary form, under which the labourers become the servants of the contractor, on whom all responsibilities for their payment rest, should be prohibited on relief-works, as it is incompatible with that direct supervision and control on the part of the supervising officer, and that free communication between him and the labourers, which are essential to secure the effectiveness of the relief. The method of payment by the piece may, however, be introduced with advantage, provided that it is optional with the labourers to choose between it and the daily wage. One or more piecework gangs might therefore be attached to each large relief work, in which all who are both able-bodied and skilful labourers should be classed, and to which those who are improving in strength and skill may, if they wish it, be transferred. The rates should be so fixed (with reference to the price of food grain) as to give a little more than the ordinary daily wage in return for the quantity of work likely to be performed. Such increased earnings may tend to encourage a spirit of industry among the labourers which will be beneficial to all ; but it should be remembered that it is not expedient to add to the outlay on relief, or to the consumption of food beyond what is essential, and that no object is to be gained by the early completion of any work put in hand. Again, at the end of a famine, if any able-bodied labourers are disinclined to go back to their ordinary work, a system of piecework may be used, with lowered rates, to induce them to go.

133. We have arrived at these conclusions after careful consideration of the arguments of those who advocate systems differing in some one or other respect from that which we recommend. Of these suggestions, one of the most important is that all relief works should be on the piece-work system ; that work should not be employed as a test of necessity, and as a condition of relief, but that it should be offered to all persons whose labour is "remunerative," that is, labourers capable of earning a living on works carried out on the usual system of the Public Works Department, at rates adjusted to the price of food. We are of opinion that experience has proved that the portion of the population not accustomed to work for wages on public works will not spontaneously seek such employment until forced to do so by want, and that it must be anticipated that many will be reduced in strength, and, at first at all events, incapable of earning a livelihood on the public works, assuming that the work to be done to earn a livelihood by everyone must be that of an able-bodied labourer. An unusual proportion will certainly be women, and a large fraction will consist of children unfit for labour, the aged and infirm, and those who are unaccustomed to the sort of work and otherwise unable to work up to the standard performed in the case of skilled labourers in ordinary times. Any attempt, therefore, to make these classes earn their living by ordinary piece-work could not fail to result in great suffering and mortality. If to avoid this the rate be adjusted to meet the powers of the least capable, it will make the works enormously costly, or if it were adjusted to the different degrees of strength of the labourers, the result would be to introduce a variety of rates suited to varying capacities, and so end in something not really differing from task work. If again, only those who can be employed profitably on works are so employed, a great mass of people will be thrown on the Government

Piecework.

Reasons for the above conclusions.

demanding gratuitous relief, but absolved from all necessity for showing that they are really in want. On these grounds we think that the only safe course for providing for proper management and economy on the one hand, and the interests of humanity on the other, is to give all those who can do a reasonable amount of work a task carefully adjusted to their powers, and pay them a wage on which life and health can be maintained; piece work being employed only under the conditions mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and gratuitous aid, as described in the succeeding section, being confined to those who are incapable of working.

Miscellaneous  
arrange-  
ments con-  
nected with  
relief-works.

134. A hospital should be attached to all large relief works, and care should be taken that all who fall sick on the work receive proper medical attendance and food, either as in-door or out-door patients. Attention should be paid to hutting the labourers in such a manner as to respect their feelings and the requirements of health and decency. The temporary markets attached to the works should be carefully supervised in respect to the quantity, quality, and price of the food offered. A special allowance should be made to those children of labourers who are of too tender an age for work; if possible, in the form of a diet adapted to their wants.

Indications  
to be drawn  
from pro-  
gress of  
relief-works.

135. The course of events on these works should be carefully watched by the officers in charge, and periodically reported to superior authority, as it will form one of the safest indications of the degree of the prevalent distress. If works carried on under adequate precautions for discipline and for enforcing a sufficient task and wage are thronged by applicants, and especially if those applicants be persons belonging to other than the ordinary labouring classes, there will be a strong presumption that the pressure is very severe, and that still larger relief operations may be necessary. If, on the other hand, few persons apply, and if there has been nothing in the management of the work to explain their reluctance, it may be accepted as an indication that the distress is not acute. Both of these presumptions may, however, prove to be erroneous in certain cases. On the one hand, as has been noticed, there are portions of every year when field work is at a standstill, and when large numbers of the population will gladly accept work though not in distress. On the other hand, there are seasons, such as those which precede sowing or harvest time, when the people can hardly be induced by any pressure of want to go to work at a distance from their villages, and there are classes with whom apathy or ignorance will produce the same result. Conclusions founded on such evidence must therefore be drawn with much caution, and with a reference to the usual habits of the people.

Relief-works  
at different  
stages of  
famine.

136. The extent to which employment should be provided will vary according to the severity of the famine, and it is therefore most necessary that the probable extent of the calamity should be ascertained as early and as carefully as possible. If it only amounts to severe scarcity the Government will commonly find it sufficient to enlarge its ordinary works, so as to offer employment to greater numbers than usual, but without any change of system; and this, with the addition of some help in the villages to those incapable of work, will probably enable the people to tide over the season of distress. If scarcity passes into famine, employment must be offered on a larger scale on special works, such as have been described. In every case care should be taken to avoid throwing workpeople out of employ, even temporarily, in re-arranging a system of works so as to supply the wants of the country; and, as far as possible, occupation should be given on these works to skilled mechanics. A corresponding expansion must also be given to the arrangements made for the gratuitous relief of the incapable. However intense and widespread the famine may become, we believe that this system of administering relief will still hold good; even if the whole of the labouring population of a great tract of country should become applicants for employment, it should not be beyond the power of the Government to furnish work for them, provided the calamity does not find it unprepared, and proper precautions are taken in the early stages of the distress. If, indeed, it should in any exceptional case become apparent that a sufficient stock of food to feed the people does not exist in and cannot be imported into the famine tract, in time enough to meet the demand for it, it may become necessary to consider whether it will not be proper to reduce the consumption of food to the utmost by stopping the relief works, and distributing to the famine-stricken population at their homes a reduced ration, sufficient only to support them without labour, and so to economise the difference between what would thus be given and what would be required to support them when engaged in labour. It cannot be said that such a condition of things might not arise in some peculiarly situated locality, and

considering its extreme gravity we have thought it right thus to allude to it, and to a possible means of alleviating it. But we do not lose sight of the risk that the increase in the number of claimants for relief thus given might in the end more than outweigh any temporary reduction in the quantity received by each claimant, and that moral depression tending to physical deterioration, which it is most important to avoid, may not improbably be produced by relief given to a large population kept in idleness. Of the reality of this last-named danger, strong opinions have been expressed by trustworthy observers of the people relieved under such conditions. It may be added that the case which is here supposed has hardly ever existed in the past, except as a consequence of want of due precaution at the outset; and that when the internal communications of the country are further improved, as we may reasonably expect them to be year by year in the future, even the few districts which are now so isolated as to be liable to a temporary inability to obtain food will cease to be exposed to that danger.

### III. — *Gratuitous Relief.*

137. The duty of relieving persons other than the able-bodied was till recently considered to rest during famines, as well as in ordinary times, with the charitable public. It is only in the course of the seasons of famine which have occurred in the last eight or ten years that this duty has been accepted by the Government. It is now fully recognized that there is as great an obligation on the State to give relief to those classes that are unable to earn their livelihood by work as to give it to those that can work, when both are alike left helpless at such a time. However great be the importance of maintaining in the community at large the sense of its responsibility for supporting its poorer members, it is obvious that this duty cannot be enforced when the stress of scarcity deprives very large numbers of their usual means of subsistence, and, as a necessary consequence, of the means which they before had of supporting the infirm and helpless members of their families or their villages. But though this principle be fully accepted, the test of experience cannot be said to have removed many serious doubts as to the best mode of procedure in administering this form of relief, or to have led as yet to any such complete uniformity of opinion among the persons to whose judgment on these matters most weight attaches, as to enable us to state our conclusions without some reserve.

Gratuitous relief the duty of the State,

138. So long as this obligation was not recognized by the State, and voluntary relief committees, being representatives of private charity, had the distribution of food in their hands, there could be no uniformity of procedure, and no specific responsibility was placed on anyone for seeing that the arrangements were sufficient. But when the State undertook that relief should be offered to all who need it, it became incumbent on the Government to control the administration of all forms of relief, and to secure an uniform and efficient system. The voluntary aid of independent persons may be utilised, but where the State is responsible for the result it must look mainly to its own officers for carrying out its policy.

to be carried out by the officers of Government.

139. Two systems have been followed in different places and at different times with regard to gratuitous relief. Under one it has been distributed in the shape of raw grain or money at the homes or in the villages of the recipients, their necessities being vouched for by responsible village officials, and tested by suitable supervision. Under the other the people have been compelled to come to relief-centres to receive it. In this case it has generally been given them in the shape of a meal of cooked food, and has often been accompanied by the condition of residence within a temporarily arranged relief-camp or poor-house.

Two systems of gratuitous relief.

140. The difference in these two systems of gratuitous relief may, no doubt, be traced to the different circumstances under which they were adopted. The more stringent system, requiring residence in a poor-house, was a somewhat natural development of the efforts of private charity with limited means at its command; and the village system was an equally natural outcome of the view which regulated the relief in 1873-74, that it was requisite for the State not only to supply employment and means of subsistence to the whole population, but to import and distribute the food itself. The poor-house system has generally been followed since 1861 in the North-Western Provinces, and has been highly recommended by many authorities for adoption elsewhere. It was believed that the objection felt to residence in a poor-house might keep away those not really in want, but would not deter any who suffered from real distress. There is, however, a great accumulation of evidence to the effect that the

Preferability

feeling of the people towards relief administered in this form is in most parts of India one of extreme repulsion; and that even in the North-Western Provinces in 1877-78 that repulsion was strong enough to cause many to lose their lives rather than to accept help on these terms. It was in Bengal in 1873-74 that the system of village relief first became prominent, and that indications were seen that it was preferable to the poor-house system, notwithstanding certain difficulties which attended it. Under any such system the difficulty of discriminating the worthy from the unworthy will be great; the village officials, where such persons exist, can seldom be thoroughly trusted to select the proper persons for the receipt of State help, and in the absence of some really trustworthy residents in the villages who can be employed by Government as agents in relief-distribution, there is great risk that the money or grain will not reach those for whom it is intended. Both systems might no doubt be better administered than they have ever yet been. If it is probable on the one hand that ameliorations of the poor-house system could be effected, under which its stringency would be less likely to repel real sufferers, on the other it is clear that much of the heavy cost which attended the operations in Bengal in 1873-74 is in no degree a necessary element of the village system. On the whole there is no doubt left in our minds that the village system should, in the present condition of India, be preferred for general adoption, inasmuch as, while this system may involve the risk of a too free grant of relief, the poor-house system involves the more serious risk of insufficient relief.

Safeguards  
with which  
village relief  
should be  
worked.

141. If gratuitous relief is never given to those who are able to do a reasonable amount of labour, but only to the children, infirm, and old, to cripples and house-ridden people, and to those necessarily required to attend to them; and if there is an efficient system of village inspection to see that the persons on the relief list are, as far as outward signs go, deserving of it, and that they do receive it; the result will be that relief will reach the majority in the most effective way, though there may be a certain small number of people who get it improperly. With these two safeguards, the danger of the misuse of the State funds will be minimized, and the danger of imposing a test so repugnant to the people as to prevent their accepting relief will be avoided. But there will still be room for relief-houses, the proper sphere of which will be to receive such persons as have separated themselves from their homes and villages,—aimless wanderers, habitual beggars, or debilitated people who have fallen out of the ranks of the labourers and require to be fed up or receive medical attendance in order to regain strength and return to work.

Utilization  
of village  
officers.

142. In most parts of India some village organization exists which offers a ready and natural, though still imperfect, machinery for coping with famine, and it is of special importance that whatever is possible should be done towards improving and strengthening this machinery where it is present, so that it may become more thoroughly efficient for the purposes of village relief. For the future progress of the country the encouragement of the principle of local self-government, by which business of all kinds should be more and more left to local direction, is of much moment, and nowhere more so than in dealing with the relief of local distress; and, however great be the difficulties in the way of its early practical realization, it will be well never to lose the opportunity of taking any step that may lead towards it.

Details of  
the village-  
relief system.

143. The first step towards organizing the system of village relief would be to convey instructions to the head men of villages as to the classes who are entitled to this relief, and as to the manner of giving it, and to direct them, with the help of the village accountants, to draw up lists showing what persons resident in the village belong to these classes. In order to enforce this duty it will probably be necessary to provide legislative sanction in each province, under which it shall be lawful for the local Government to define who shall for the purposes of famine relief be considered the head man of each village, and to impose penalties for the failure to discharge the prescribed duty, or for any fraudulent act committed while discharging it. The lists thus drawn up should be scrutinized by the officer of the circle, who should inspect all persons on the list (except women of respectable position, regarding whom he must take other means for obtaining the necessary information), visit their houses, ascertain whether and from what cause the means of support on which they have hitherto lived have failed them, and what their actual circumstances are. He should then, if satisfied that they deserve it, place them on the village relief list, giving to each person a certificate to that effect and a copy of the list to the head village official, which should be produced before every inspecting officer. The relief should consist of a dole of grain sufficient for the subsistence of the recipient,



whether man, woman, or child, and arrangements should be made, suited to the local circumstances, to secure the receipt of this dole without fail at specified intervals of time. In return for this dole any persons who are capable of doing a little labour, though not fit to be sent to a relief-work, might be required to perform any light tasks in the village or its neighbourhood, such as aiding in the distribution of grain, cleaning out ditches, or deepening tanks, which may be useful for sanitary or other purposes, under the direction of the village head man. On the occasion of each visit from an inspecting officer the persons on the village relief-list should be examined to see if any have become fit for labour on relief-works, and those who have become fit should be struck off the list and instructed where employment will be given them. At the same time any new person who may be found qualified for relief should be added to the list, and careful inquiry should be made whether those who are on the list do actually receive the sanctioned quantity of food.

144. In the case of those respectable women, who by national custom are unable to appear in public, and who are generally of the Mahommedan religion, personal inspection by the relieving officer is impossible, and it is necessary to employ some other check. Committees of native gentlemen who have personal knowledge of the circumstances of the families concerned can generally be utilised for this object, and the circle officers should further test applications by all other information which they can collect. The relief given to women of this class, and to their children, should consist of doles of grain, and in return such labour as they can perform should be required of them, which may ordinarily be done by delivering to them a specified quantity of cotton to be spun into thread. Parda-nashin women.

145. Relief-houses are intended for the reception of persons who have no homes, or have cut themselves off from their homes, and are unfit for employment on relief-works, and for professional beggars who cannot be made to work. A system of patrol should be organised to visit the lanes and byways of towns, and the roads principally traversed by travellers, in order to bring such persons in, and prevent their dying out of sight; and authority should be given by legislation to enable Government officers to compel them to accept relief, even against their will. There may also be a few persons in the villages respecting whose necessities the circle officer cannot satisfy himself, and whom he may require to go to the relief-house as a test that they are really in need. These relief-houses should be established on the outskirts of the principal towns, in localities convenient for constant supervision by responsible civil officers. The greatest care should be taken in their management to avoid offending against popular prejudices, and this will be best assured by associating with the civil officers a body of native gentlemen who should be consulted on all matters connected with caste or social observances, and who would make it publicly known that nothing is done against which any reasonable objection can be raised. Subject to these conditions, relief should ordinarily be given in these places in the shape of cooked food, and residence within the enclosure should be enforced. The utmost vigilance should be exercised to see that the store of grain does not fall short, that the food is properly cooked and distributed, and that no fraud or mistake is allowed by which the ration can be reduced below the authorised quantity. The inmates should ordinarily be employed as far as possible in doing all work required for the service of the institution, and those not thus employed should be set to spin, weave, make rope, or to other light and profitable labour. Those who improve in health and strength should be removed, when fit, to relief works. A hospital should be attached to every large relief-house, and the ordinary residents, as well as the sick in hospital, should be the subjects of regular and careful medical supervision. Relief-houses.

146. An efficient system of village relief will, we trust, in co-operation with the other measures which we recommend, have the effect of preventing that wandering of the poor, which leads to the dissolution of the village communities, and is one of the principal causes of famine mortality. Most of those who have an interest in the land will remain in their homes without the need of other assistance than advances and the suspension of land revenue for the less substantial members of the class. The able bodied of the labouring class with their families, so far as they are healthy and capable, should be settled on works at a moderate distance from their villages. The remaining class, the incapable poor who can offer neither security for advances nor labour in return for relief, and whom we therefore propose to supply with food in their homes, will not form a large per-centage of the population, and the timely preparation of a framework of village relief, to be administered by responsible supervisors, ranging from the European superintendent to the recognised head men and

village officers, will provide for them. Thus would be secured a scheme of relief which would give to all classes assurance of ample assistance in their own neighbourhood, and leave them without inducement to wander.

#### IV.—*Village Inspection.*

Establishment of a system of village inspection.

147. The opinion of all persons of experience is unanimous as to the importance of establishing a system under which there should be a constant and careful inspection of all villages in the distressed tracts by a special staff of officers; and it is generally agreed that no better example can be found of the organisation required for this purpose than was afforded in Behar in 1874. The method then adopted was to divide the country into circles of convenient size, each of which was placed under its proper officers with a regular gradation of authority, and with a clear definition of duties. These posts were filled by utilising the existing staff of district officials to the utmost, by borrowing both European and Native civil and military officers from other departments, and by making use of volunteers of ability and character, and especially such of the local landed and moneyed gentry or pensioners of the Government as were willing to contribute their influence and knowledge to the aid of the State.

Object of the system.

148. Such a special organisation should be created whenever the prospect of famine becomes imminent. Its object would be to obtain specific information as to the degree and locality of the distress and the classes and persons in need of relief; and to convey to the people a knowledge of the measures taken for their relief, and to encourage those who really need aid to apply for it. The inspecting officers would examine into the condition of all persons in every village, and especially of the poorest classes; they would ascertain if any are in want and have not applied for assistance, and would see that they receive it; they would also ascertain if any who have applied for relief are not in want, and ought to be struck off the list. To those who are able-bodied they would make known the places where employment is offered; and if any fail to seek work, they would, through the influence of the village head, or otherwise, encourage them to avail themselves of the offer. For those who are in want, and incapable of work, they would see that the arrangements for giving gratuitous relief are efficient, and that no unnecessary delay, or mistake, or fraud intervenes to prevent their getting it. The circles should be so constituted that the inspecting officers attached to each may be able to visit every village within a certain fixed period of time, which would be greater or less according to the degree of the distress. While making these visits the inspector would, in addition to the special duties already described, supervise the arrangements made for the supply of funds or food to meet the requirements of the people receiving relief, and would, if so directed by superior authority, carry on the necessary inquiries preliminary to the suspension of the land revenue, the loan of money to the landed classes, or other matters. Efforts might also be made to induce the agriculturists to apply themselves to the raising of quick-growing and profitable crops, and seed might be procured and distributed for this purpose where necessary.

Nature of the organisation.

149. The extent to which this system should be carried, and the time at which it should be brought into operation, will depend greatly on the stage and on the severity of the famine. At the earliest stage, and so long as it is still uncertain whether scarcity will end in famine or not, it will not be necessary, as a rule, to create special circles or to organise a large establishment. But on the occasion of any considerable failure of crops, such as to require the opening of relief-works, the Government should draw out a scheme for the division of the country into circles, for purposes of inspection, and should make the arrangements necessary in order to be ready to post the special staff to those circles. The first duty of the inspecting officers when appointed would be to collect all available information as to the condition of the people, to satisfy themselves as to the out-turn of the crops on the ground or those just harvested, and, after revising and verifying all previous reports, to assist the Government by their opinions as to the prospects of the country. For this purpose officials strange to the work and to the country or its language will be of little use, and it will generally be the best plan to set free the district officers from other duties, and to engage them actively in this occupation. As distress deepens the staff should be strengthened, and the areas of inspection subdivided. When famine has unmistakably set in, and the various measures of relief are fully at work, the inspecting staff in all its grades should be constantly in motion, and the areas of the circles should then be laid out on such a scale, with regard both to the distances to be travelled and the population, that every village may be visited by a subordinate officer if possible once a week, and by a superior officer at least once a fortnight.



## V.—Food Supply.

150. The question whether the direct intervention of Government to control or aid the action of private trade in the supply of food in time of scarcity is likely to be beneficial or otherwise, is one which has been so frequently and completely discussed that it hardly seems necessary for us to treat it at any length. Opinion has more and more steadily settled down, as economical knowledge has advanced, to the conclusion that as a rule such intervention should be avoided, but that exceptional circumstances may justify or even require it.

Interven-  
tion of  
Government.

151. The prohibition of exportation was in the beginning of the century looked on as the first weapon in the Government armoury, and it was suggested in 1867 in the Orissa famine, and again in 1873, in the case of Bengal; but the arguments brought against it by Lord Northbrook on the last occasion are, we think, unanswerable, and such suggestions will, it may be hoped, never be repeated, or if repeated, never entertained. These arguments were concisely summed up by the Secretary of State, who said that nothing could justify such a measure except reasonable certainty that the exports would so exhaust the resources of India as a whole as to render them insufficient to supply the wants of the distressed districts, and that no such result was even probable.

Government  
prohibition  
of export.

152. Importation of food by Government into a distressed tract may take several forms. In its broadest form—that of buying and importing food to supply the general wants of the whole population—it is improbable that it will ever be found necessary again. It was adopted in Orissa in 1866 at a time when no other resource was available, because the discovery of the exhaustion of food stocks was made just when the setting in of the south-west monsoon rendered communication by sea too dangerous for private trade to embark in the business of importation; but had there been either earlier knowledge of the coming calamity, or better means of communication with the distressed province, the step could hardly have been thought necessary. Reasons similar to those which were held to justify the proceedings of 1866 were also appealed to in support of similar action in Ajmir in 1868, and of the much larger operations of the Bengal Government in 1874. With reference to these last, there appears to be an unanimous opinion that, in consequence of the extension of the railway system, no such measures can ever again be required in Northern Bengal. Measures which involve any large supersession of the operations of private trade must almost unavoidably be in some important respects productive of inconvenience and loss, and should not be resorted to without the most complete proof of their necessity.

Government  
importation  
of food.

153. We have no doubt that the true principle for the Government to adopt as its general rule of conduct in this matter is to leave the business of the supply and distribution of food to private trade, taking care that every possible facility is given for its free action, and that all obstacles material or fiscal are, as far as practicable, removed. The manner in which the demand for grain in Southern India in 1877 was met by supplies sent from the North showed the promptitude with which Indian trade will operate when the facilities for transport and the profit expected are adequate. The imports by sea into the distressed districts amounted, in the two years 1876-77 and 1877-78, to about 2 millions of tons.\* The total quantity of grain carried on the railways in all parts of India was double this amount,† and the actual weight conveyed by them into the famine area may have been about 1 or 1½ millions of tons, in addition to the quantity brought by sea. If, as is hence probable, the total import in the year 1877 was 2 million tons, it would at the rate of 1 ton to 6 persons for a year have been sufficient for 12 million people, or one third of the whole population affected. These results were produced by the help of a system of railways, mostly single lines, and of which only one branch traversed the worst famine tract. It is only reasonable to anticipate that with every year's additional experience of the use to be made of the railways and telegraphs the activity and sensitiveness of Indian trade will continue to grow, and that with the new stimulus thus imparted to it, and the gradual extension of railways into districts where they do not yet exist, the power of meeting the wants of the population in time of local

Activity of  
private trade  
in India.

	Tons.
* 1876-77 - - - -	750,000
1877-78 - - - -	1,200,000
† 1877 - - - -	3,574,000
Half 1878 - - - -	1,192,000

scarcity will be still further developed. Every interference by the Government with the operations of trade must be adverse to this tendency, and prejudicial to the growth of those habits of self-reliance which it is so essential for Government to encourage.

Extension  
of railways.

154. It is to the future extension of railways that we look as the most complete justification of our belief that the trade of the country may be confidently left to provide for the supply of food in times of scarcity. Such an extension has been going on for some years past, and it will, we trust, henceforth receive an additional impetus, as by the help of these works alone can the whole resources of the country be brought to bear in time of difficulty on any distressed area. The charge for transport between the most distant parts of India connected by rail does not now exceed one anna per seer, or  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound, and there is reason to hope that it may be reduced to a considerably smaller sum. At the present rate grain costing 24 seers per rupee or  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound could have been taken from Northern India to the famine districts in the south, and sold at 8 seers per rupee or  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound, with a fair margin of profit. Such being the case we cannot doubt that with the growth of these means of communication and their continued use, all the requirements of every part of the country will be met by the natural operations of trade, without the necessity of any interference on the part of Government.

Ability of  
the country  
to feed  
itself.

155. A resolution to rely entirely on the ordinary operations of trade to meet the wants of the country in time of famine must unquestionably rest, not only on the expected activity of the traders, but also on the probability of the requisite supplies of food being forthcoming at the critical time. The question should therefore be answered, whether there is sufficient ground for believing that the quantity of grain likely to be needed to meet the wants of such large areas as may be stricken with famine in a single year will be certainly forthcoming. We believe that there need be no apprehension as to such a provision being forthcoming in time of famine from the parts of the country not affected, though no doubt considerable pressure would be entailed on their inhabitants in proportion to the magnitude of the export. The quantity, though large in itself, bears but a moderate ratio to the whole produce of the districts in which it may be presumed, in accordance with prolonged experience, there will be no scarcity.

Estimate  
of maximum  
famine  
demand and  
available  
supply.

156. The following figures (though they are but approximate and rough estimates made from data which we hope soon to see more accurately established) indicate that the ordinary out-turn of food in British India exceeds 50 million tons, and the ordinary surplus available for storage, for export, or for the luxurious consumption of the richer classes is more than 5 million tons.

Province.	Popu- lation.	Food Crop Area.	Out-turn of Food.	Area under Non- food Crop.	Ordinary Consumption.					Surplus.
					Food.	Seed.	Cattle Food.	Wastage.	Total.	
Punjab	17,600,000	Acres. 18,500,000	Tons. 5,330,000	Acres. 2,500,000	Tons. 3,800,000	Tons. 390,000	Tons. 250,000	Tons. 270,000	Tons. 4,710,000	Tons. 620,000
N. W. Provinces and Oudh.	41,000,000	31,450,000	11,230,000	5,200,000	8,420,000	820,000	830,000	500,000	10,570,000	660,000
Bengal	60,000,000	48,000,000	17,100,000	?	13,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	900,000	15,900,000	1,200,000
Central Provinces	8,200,000	12,000,000	2,750,000	2,500,000	1,660,000	460,000	180,000	150,000	2,450,000	300,000
Berar	2,250,000	3,700,000	620,000	2,800,000	400,000	30,000	80,000	30,000	540,000	80,000
Bombay	16,000,000	21,500,000	4,500,000	5,500,000	3,300,000	290,000	260,000	210,000	4,150,000	350,000
Madras	31,000,000	26,000,000	8,500,000	2,500,000	6,300,000	400,000	440,000	420,000	7,560,000	940,000
Mysore	5,000,000	5,100,000	1,500,000	500,000	1,100,000	60,000	50,000	75,000	1,285,000	215,000
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	800,000
Total	181,350,000	166,250,000	51,580,000	21,500,000	37,980,000	3,450,000	3,090,000	2,555,000	47,165,000	5,165,000

The figures in the last column show the estimated annual surplus from which the several provinces, if free from drought, could supply the deficiency in provinces suffering from famine. Experience indicates that the largest area with which we may have to deal in a single year is not likely to exceed the tract affected in 1876-77, the total population of which was about 36 millions. It is estimated that in that year the crop in Bombay was short of the average by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million tons, in Madras by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions, and in Mysore by 1 million tons; and the difference between this estimate of the out-turn in these provinces and the quantity required for a year's

consumption at the ordinary rate is  $4\frac{3}{4}$  million tons. But the deficit actually to be met will be sensibly less than this amount. For a calamity of this kind immediately leads the population to reduce its ordinary rate of consumption both for men and cattle, and to guard more carefully against the waste that usually occurs. So far, too, as land remains unsown during the drought, something is saved in seed grain. From these causes the above-stated deficit of  $4\frac{3}{4}$  million tons might be reduced to 3 millions. To meet this the local stocks, which there is reason to believe may commonly suffice for not less than three months consumption of the local population, are first drawn upon, and as they begin to be depleted prices rise high enough to attract supplies from distant parts of the country. When the imports from without into a famine area are very large, as in the case of 1876-77, there is a corresponding rise of price and check of local consumption established in the exporting districts also; and thus, partly by enforced economy in these districts also, and partly by the contribution of their local surplus stocks, the pressure is spread over a wide extent of country in a greater or less degree. There would thus be available to meet the estimated deficit of 3 million tons, first, the local stocks of the distressed area, which, taken at three months' supply of the people's food, amount to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  millions; second, the year's surplus of the districts not affected, which, by the figures in the above table would be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million tons, but which might be expected to be larger in consequence of the diminished consumption; and third, the local stocks in those districts; and these three sources of supply, taken together, would appear to be quite sufficient to provide what was required. The yield per acre, on which the foregoing estimate is based, is derived from the local detailed reports, and is so moderate that we have no doubt that it can be maintained, or may be readily increased; and it is important to observe that the surplus which we believe to be sufficient to meet the deficiency of food consequent on the severest drought on record, or likely to occur, does not exceed 6 per cent. of the total present produce of the country.

157. The smallness of the export of food grain other than rice has been adduced as an evidence of the danger of trusting to the surplus produce of India for the food supply of the people. But this fact merely signifies that other countries do not consume the millets of India. The exports are consequent on the demand of foreign countries, and no country grows more food than it can either consume at home or sell to foreigners. Nor in relation to this matter should we overlook the fact that though India as a whole now produces, and is likely to produce, sufficient food for its population, in any season of drought, and that imports are not likely to be needed, supplies from other countries are certainly obtainable. The prices at which grain is bought and sold in seasons of scarcity in India, viz., from 50s. to 60s. per quarter, will generally admit of imports being made with commercial profit from Egypt and Southern Europe, as well as from the rice-producing countries east of Singapore, and might probably draw supplies from a much larger area.

Exports  
and possible  
imports.

158. Judging from these considerations we can have no doubt that the surplus produce of India, taken as a whole, at present furnishes the means of meeting the demands of any part of the country likely to suffer from famine at any one time. It must, however, be observed that the present estimated yearly surplus would soon be all consumed by the increase of population which it is reasonable to anticipate in the future, unless the production should keep pace with that increase. The agricultural and trade statistics of the past 20 years justify the conclusion that the increased production of all sorts has up to the present time more than kept pace with the requirements of an increasing population and the known large area of land which may still be brought under profitable cultivation, and the possibilities of securing increased production by means of improved agriculture and extended irrigation, afford reasonable grounds of confidence for the future. Fears, however, have been expressed that the grazing lands have already in many parts of the country been injuriously curtailed by being turned into arable land. If this be the case there will be no means of adding to the food supply otherwise than by introducing an improved agriculture which should yield a moderate increase on each acre already cultivated, and by bringing under the plough some of those vast tracts of uncultivated land which are fortunately still available; and eventually there must be pressing need for such measures of improvement. The gradual movement of the surplus population, where excessive, to these virgin tracts, would further assure the prospects of the future. We strongly urge on the Government the great importance of these considerations.

Probabilities  
of the future.

159. At the same time that we recommend the general principle of abstention from interference with private trade in the supply of food to any tract suffering from scarcity, we admit that there are exceptional cases in which the Government may

Cases in  
which inter-  
ference is  
admissible:

(1.) Provi-  
sion of food  
required for  
relief works  
and gratui-  
tous distri-  
bution ;

(2.) Stimu-  
lus to trade  
where it is  
sluggish ;

(3.) Inter-  
vention by  
Government  
where trade  
fails to act,

(4.) Or  
refuses to  
sell.

Proposal for  
Government  
storage.

find it necessary to intervene. The success of relief measures essentially depends on there always being grain to be bought by those who receive money wages, and grain to be distributed to those who receive food; and it is an important duty of the Government officials who superintend the relief to see that this assumption is verified, to make all necessary arrangements with local or with distant merchants for the supply of grain, or in the last resort to lay in a stock to be drawn upon in the event of failure. This is particularly necessary in the case of relief-works, which must often be situated in localities where no arrangements for the sale of food exist. By settling down a large population of labourers in such places an abnormal demand is created which, unless local trade is very active, the Government is bound to meet by providing a special machinery for the purpose of supplying food. In districts in which communications or the means of transport are defective, or to which access by railways or by water cannot be secured at all seasons, or generally in the event of well ascertained slackness on the part of the local traders to prepare for an emergency, Government might give assistance in improving the transport or in the supply of fodder for cattle, and might encourage and stimulate trade, by guaranteeing a price for grain laid down at the more distant and inaccessible towns, or by advancing money to merchants to lay out in the trade. In purely agricultural tracts, where wages are paid in grain and not in money, and the local demand of the small towns is supplied not by imports from distant marts, but by small purchases from the stores of the agriculturists, it may happen that the agriculturists refuse to sell for fear of not having enough for their own consumption, and the local traders may be afraid to import through inexperience and the want of correspondents in the large marts. In such a case the Government would rightly intervene, and its action in importing grain from a distance might have a beneficial effect, both by proving to the local traders that such an undertaking is practicable and profitable, and by removing the panic which has led the landowners to close their grain pits. It might even become necessary for Government to import grain for sale to the public in such an event as a combination of local dealers to refuse to sell, or only to sell at prices unduly raised above the rates of neighbouring markets. In all cases in which Government intervention in the supply of food becomes necessary, the purchase, under suitable arrangements, of surplus stocks in parts of the country where they are available would secure those objects which it has been supposed could be attained by the prohibition of export. But much caution will be required in every case lest interference should aggravate the evil which it is designed to avert, and have the effect of preventing traders from entering the market while it is being operated upon by the Government.

160. There is another form of Government action in relation to the food supply which we have had occasion to consider with attention, and to which it is desirable to refer. It is that the Government should store grain in the periods which intervene between famines, and should thus be prepared in time of distress with a supply sufficient for the wants of that portion of the people which is likely to be affected. The probable cost appears to us to offer a most serious *prima facie* objection to such a proposal. For it is obvious that any system of State storage to be effectual must be continuous, and that the quantity stored must be the maximum supply that can be required on any one occasion. It implies not merely the intention to dispense with the assistance of trade in the food supply of a large mass of the people when prices are very high, but the adoption of a policy which may place such assistance wholly out of reach. The calculation of cost must, therefore, provide for the storing of the largest supply that can be needed in a season of extreme distress, and for keeping up this supply permanently. It has been estimated (*see* paras. 73-75 of the Report) that  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the population may at any time require relief for a year in an extreme famine, and that the whole population, on the average, may be reckoned to suffer from famine once in 54 years. If it be assumed (hypothetically) that the storing is to be applied to a tract having a population of 40 millions, which is about one-fifth of the total population of India, the permanent supply stored must be sufficient for  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of this number, or three millions, which, at six persons to the ton, gives a total quantity of 500,000 tons. This, it may also be reckoned, will have to be replaced once in the course of 54 years, as in this period the whole population will have suffered famine, and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of it will have received relief.

Its probable  
great cost.

161. It thus appears that the actual quantity of grain required for relief for the specified population, whether it is stored or bought as occasion requires, will, on the scale adopted in the Report, be 500,000 tons for each 54 years. If it is stored, its original cost will be enhanced by interest for 54 years on the capital invested in the

purchase, which will be  $2\frac{3}{4}$  times its first price, and by the cost of storing, renewal to meet waste, and management, which should certainly be taken at not less than the interest, so that the ultimate cost will be  $6\frac{1}{2}$  times the first cost. On the other hand, the probable cost, if the grain be purchased when it is required, that is, in a season of very high prices, could hardly exceed three times the price in a season of low prices, and on the average it would probably be cheaper than this. Consequently, so far from there being a financial advantage in the storing, it would almost certainly be more than double as costly as the purchase at the time the grain was wanted.

If we were to assume that the supply should be sufficient for the whole landless class of the same tract, or say one-fifth of the population, instead of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. as before reckoned, the quantity to be stored will be 1,333,000 tons of grain instead of 500,000 tons. Therefore the true ultimate cost of the stock, at the assumed price of 5l. per ton, with 10 per cent. per annum added for 54 years, to cover interest and charges, would amount to about 42,000,000l., or nearly 800,000l. yearly for the area that has been hypothetically assumed, containing one-fifth of the population of India, and therefore would represent an expenditure of nearly 4 millions yearly for the whole country. Nor should it be lost sight of that the necessity for relief may extend beyond the period of one year, for which alone these calculations provide; and to meet such a contingency a proportional increase of the quantity of grain stored, and of the sum locked up by its purchase would be required, which, if the period found necessary in Madras in 1877-78 were accepted as a guide, might add five-sixths to the amounts above named. This estimate, it must be remembered, refers to the mere cost of the food, to which would have to be added a large sum for the administrative charges connected with famine relief. Any hope of reducing the cost by laying in the stock by degrees in the course of years of plenty is obviously incompatible with the essential conditions that famine may occur in any year, and that the store must always be ready and always sufficient. Moreover, the expectation that by selling portions of the stock in years of high prices, but not of famine, a profit might be obtained, and the ultimate cost of the transaction might be thus reduced, is wholly inconsistent with the intention of keeping a reserve of food sufficient for all possible contingencies, and such a proceeding would be entirely beyond the proper scope of Government action.

162. On the whole, any argument based on supposed economy seems to us quite untenable. If we saw reason to think that there was any probability of a failure of the food supply of the country as a whole, or of the means of its conveyance from the places where it was abundant to those where it was deficient, we might feel bound to discuss the proposed storing by Government more carefully as a possible remedy and to point out in detail the very serious practical difficulties that in our judgment would attend the attempt to carry it out. But we are satisfied that there is no such probability, and that there is no justification, either on these grounds or on the score of economy, for adopting a course which we consider to be opposed to the prolonged teachings of the past, as conveyed in the history of the progress of civilization, and of the steps by which the various States of Europe have passed from a condition of frequently-recurring famine, such as that which now characterizes India, to one in which, though high prices are at times inevitable, actual famine due to the absence of food may be said to be unknown. No Government has ever succeeded in such a measure as that which is here proposed. The repeated and continued attempts to alleviate the difficulty of securing the food supply of the people by direct State interference, which have been made in our own country and elsewhere, have always ended in failure, and the safe of the population and their freedom from extreme fluctuations of the price of bread were only assured from the time when all such efforts were finally abandoned.

Economical  
difficulties  
and dangers.

Though for these reasons we do not think it necessary to discuss the matter in a detail, we may indicate that the dangers and difficulties consequent on the storing of grain by the Government would be very great, especially in respect to the manner in which the stores of grain should be utilized, and in which the Government should regulate its action in opening or closing the stores. The result, upon the dealers in grain, of the Government suddenly opening the stores when prices rose beyond certain fixed amount, and upon the people when the stores were closed, the free trade having meanwhile been destroyed or its action paralyzed, must, we think, be disastrous.

163. We greatly fear that any system of Government storing, if once brought home to the people, would produce most fatal effects on their prudential habits, and that the existence of a public granary in every village, ready to be thrown open whenever distress passed beyond a certain point, would be a standing encouragement to impro-

Bad effects  
on the  
people,



and on trade. vidence and recklessness, and to that most dangerous of popular vices, the disposition to force the Government to grant public charity. The plan would strike a death-blow at that healthy development of the internal trade of the country, now in an early stage, but steadily thriving under the encouragement given by the extension of railways and complete free trade, and it would raise a fatal barrier to the growth of those qualities of self-reliance in the community without which the country can never raise itself in the scale of civilization. Chronic famine is, we are satisfied, one of the diseases of the infancy of nations, and its remedy will never be found in prolonging the tutelage of the State, and least of all, in measures which would render escape from such tutelage almost impossible.

Sufficiency  
of private  
storage.

164. We have fully recognized the necessity for private storage of the surplus grain of years of plenty, and we have complete confidence that this is already done on a large scale. What is requisite is to encourage the practice within the limits that true economy requires, not by the intervention of the State, but by the growing intelligence of the people; and to do what is necessary to ensure the surplus thus stored being rendered available, whenever and wherever it is needed, by extended railway communication, through the agency of the natural trade of the country.

Difficulties  
best met by  
improved  
communica-  
tions and  
extended  
trade.

165. On the whole it is highly improbable that Government will ever be required in the future to supply food to meet the wants of the entire population of any large area in time of distress, either by way of purchase and local distribution, or by storing on a large scale. Until, however, the whole country is more completely supplied with railways or canals, by which food can be transported rapidly, cheaply, and in large quantities, to every part where severe want may exist, the possibility of some unusual demand for Government interference in particular localities or for special classes of people cannot be shut out, nor the danger of the occurrence of a great calamity altogether removed. It is therefore to the improvement of the internal communications and the removal of all obstructions to the free course of trade, accompanied by the extension of irrigation in suitable localities and an improved agriculture, that we look for obtaining security in the future against disastrous failures of the food supply in tracts visited by drought. It is not so much any actual deficiency of the requisite food in the country at large which is to be feared as the absence of the means of transporting and distributing the supply available, and the inability of the distressed population to pay for it. The failure of the stocks of food of those who habitually depend on their own harvests, and the want of employment for those who live on wages, can only be met by the offer of employment and wages wherewith to buy food, or by gratuitous relief, and the difficulties in the way of accomplishing this with a population of millions are the really serious obstacles that have to be surmounted.

#### VI.—*Suspension of Revenue and Loans to the Landed Classes.*

Duties of  
Government  
to the  
landed  
classes.

166. The duties devolving on Government in relation to the class of landholders are for the most part of a different character from those that attach to it in its relation to the landless classes, which, whenever their ordinary means of employment fail, become in danger of starvation. Those who possess beneficial interests in the land do not in time of famine, as a rule, suffer the extremity of want, or go in danger of their lives; but a large number of them are often severely pinched and obliged to borrow money for their support, and those who borrow at such a time do it on terms which make repayment difficult and may embarrass them for life. It becomes therefore the part of Government to assist such persons, who are in the position of its tenants or co-proprietors of the land, and this may best be done in two ways: (1) by abstaining from collecting the ordinary instalments of the land revenue, the payment of which must add to the difficulties of all who are hard pressed; (2) by lending at low interest the sums they require for their sustenance and the cultivation of their land, for the maintenance and employment of their dependants.

167. With regard to the land revenue, it has been generally accepted that where settlements are made for a long period of years, an average moderate demand should be fixed which should not vary with the ordinary fluctuations of the seasons, but can and should be paid in bad and good years alike. But this applies to moderate fluctuations only, and not to years of extraordinary drought, or to cases of the total or almost total destruction of the crops which ensues from that or other calamities. Even on such occasions there are among the landowners many wealthy persons who are well able to pay, but the great majority will not have sufficient means both to pay the revenue and to provide for their own support; and to force them to meet the

Government demand could not be justified. We consider that the true principle on which leniency should be shown is this: that nobody should be forced in such seasons as these to borrow in order to pay the land revenue, but that all who can pay it without borrowing should do so. It has to be borne in mind, on the one side, that the landholder will benefit by the great rise of prices consequent on a great scarcity, so far as he still obtains a surplus of produce for sale in excess of his own wants; but on the other, when the drought is extreme no such surplus may be left, and he may even be obliged to buy food at ruinous rates for his own consumption. When the outcome is such that the landowners have any surplus to sell they can probably pay the land revenue. But when information is received from the Agricultural Department that the failure of the main crop, or one of the main crops, of the year has been so great that no surplus produce is left to the landowners above their own necessary consumption and that of their dependants, instructions should be issued to the collectors that they may at their discretion suspend till further notice the demand for land revenue due on account of the crop which has been lost, subject to such conditions as are requisite to pass on the relief to all tenants or subordinate holders. It should be understood that such suspensions ought to be liberally given to all but the wealthier individuals, and those who from exceptional advantages have escaped the general failure of the crops; and great care must be taken that the granting of this relief is not unduly delayed while inquiries are being carried on into the claims and circumstances of individuals.

168. In granting relief by suspending the land revenue, it should manifestly be an essential condition that it is accompanied by a corresponding relaxation of the demand on subordinate holders for rent. The relief to the tenants might be secured in one of two ways; either by passing a law similar to the provision in the present rent-law in the North-Western Provinces, under which the Government might declare, in any given case, that the payment of the whole or a part of the rent shall be suspended, a corresponding suspension of the land revenue being at the same time granted to the lawful recipient of the rent; or, if such a law were thought inexpedient, by making the suspension of the land revenue contingent on the corresponding voluntary suspension of the rent. We are not in a position to say how far the extension of the principle of the law of the North-Western Provinces to all parts of India might be found practicable, but we are of opinion that the principle is equitable, and should if possible be so extended. Such an extension should provide for the relief of the tenants of all persons who, whether as grantees, inamdars, or under any other name, are entitled to receive all or any part of the land revenue, whenever similar relief is given to the tenants on neighbouring estates which pay land revenue to the Government. With regard to the question whether interest should be charged on revenue so suspended the practice varies in different provinces, and we do not think that it is needful for us to give an opinion on this subject further than by saying that if any interest is charged it should not exceed one anna in the rupee, or  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., and whatever rate of interest is charged by Government on arrears of revenue, the same and no more should be chargeable by landowners on arrears of rent due from their tenants. Suspension of rent.

169. It is not expedient to remit any part of the land revenue till it becomes certain that it cannot be collected without undue pressure on the persons liable for it. The demand suspended should stand over, in the expectation of an early return of prosperity, till the Government by a special order directs its collection, or, the circumstances are unfavourable, its final remission. The same general considerations will apply to remissions of rent as to remissions of revenue, and in no case should a tenant be relieved from his liability to pay his ordinary rent, unless his inability to do so is fully established. With regard to the realisation both of a portion of the demand which is not suspended during the time of famine, as well of that which is so suspended and eventually has to be collected, the utmost discretion should be used; the arrears should not be exacted too promptly after the close of distress, when they can only be recovered by sale of the defaulter's agricultural cattle and implements, or of his rights in the land; and the Government should prescribe the extent to which the ordinary process of collection should be followed, or whether any special procedure should be substituted for it. Remission of revenue.

170. The suspension of revenue may be an adequate relief to the more substantial landowner, who, when this drain on his resources is removed, has enough left to struggle through the time of hardship; but it does not entirely provide for the case of the small agriculturist who finds himself without the necessary means either of subsistence or of preparing his lands for tillage, and who, if he is obliged to have Loans to the landed classes.



recourse to the money-lender, can only obtain a loan on ruinous terms. It is moreover desirable that in times of famine reasonable help should be given to landholders to enable them to undertake works on their estates by which employment may be offered to the poorer tenants or labourers. It should, therefore, be the policy of the Government to advance money freely and on easy terms on the security of the land, whenever it can be done without serious risk of ultimate loss. The experience of the Bengal famine of 1874, and other less conspicuous instances, have shown how faithful the landed classes are, as a rule, in repaying such advances, and how inappreciable is the risk attending them when they are judiciously made. The rules under which such advances are given should admit of their being devoted to the purchase of seed grain and bullocks, and to the employment of agricultural labour. They should be made under the general supervision of the Agricultural Department, and when famine has set in, through the inspecting officer in charge of the relief circle. The grant of such loans should be regarded as of primary importance among the measures adopted for meeting distress, and should receive early and sedulous attention on the part of the local Government. No undue pressure should be used to induce the people to accept such loans, nor should they be given unless the applicant is able to show that he is in serious need of such assistance. On the other hand, after these advances have been made, care must be taken not to check the recovery of the country by a too prompt demand for their repayment.

### VII.—*Local Financial Responsibility*

Localization  
of the cost  
of famine  
relief.

Advantages  
of this prin-  
ciple.

\* Despatch  
to Govern-  
ment of  
India, 25  
Nov. 1875.

171. There are obvious advantages in so localizing the cost of relief as to bring home to its administrators a sense of personal responsibility for its amount and the burden it creates. The guarantees for economy must be incomplete so long as the incidence of the charge is spread over an area so wide that its presence becomes virtually imperceptible, and so long as those who bear it have no power to keep it within proper limits.

172. It was observed by the Secretary of State, and we think with perfect justice,\* that, "however plain may be the primary obligation of the State to do all that is possible towards preserving the lives of the people, it would be most unwise to overlook the great danger of tacitly accepting, if not the doctrine, at least the practice of making the general revenues bear the whole burden of meeting all local difficulties, or of relieving all local distress, and of supplying the needful funds by borrowing in a shape that establishes a permanent charge for all future time." \* \* \* "The question which is thus raised of how to make local resources aid in meeting local wants is no doubt one of great difficulty and complexity, especially in a country like India. But the difficulty of providing any satisfactory solution of it should not be allowed to obscure the perception of its vital importance to the future well-being of the country, as well as of the troubles to the Government and the demoralization of the people which must necessarily result from postponing too long the introduction of some system under which shall be suitably recognised the undoubted responsibility which rests on the people themselves to provide for their own support and well-being. The duty of the State does not extend further than to see that the needful means are supplied for giving effect to this principle, and for distributing the local burdens arising from its practical application in the manner which shall be most equitable and least onerous to those who have to bear them." This sense of responsibility would of course be most effectually quickened by meeting famine expenditure out of the proceeds of local taxation, and by administering the relief through representative members of the tax-paying body, themselves responsible for providing all needful funds.

173. There are, however, insurmountable difficulties in the way of any but a very partial development of such a system in India at the present time. In the first place it involves the assumption that the various provinces are, on the whole, equally well qualified to bear the burden that would thus be imposed upon them. But this is far from being the case; not only are some parts of the country much more exposed to drought than others, but from the nature of the case the richest and most resourceful populations are those which are least exposed to this visitation; so that, supposing the cost of relief to be localized, the heaviest load would be imposed on those portions of the community least able to bear it. There are some localities whose physical conditions preclude the possibility of famine, and which, when famines devastate less fortunate districts, reap direct advantage from the rise in prices. Moreover, the various provinces differ much in the benefits they severally have derived from the

expenditure of the general revenues, some tracts having been secured and enriched by a large outlay of the public money, while for others little or nothing has been done; and if at the present time a strict system of localization were introduced it would have the result of still further enhancing these inequalities by freeing the more advanced and prosperous districts from a contribution which they could easily spare, and leaving the people of the localities least favoured by nature, and worst supplied with the means of resistance to meet their trials, without that support which they could fairly claim, and which their fellows have received, from the resources of the Empire as a whole. On all these grounds we are led to the conclusion that no system could be effectually and justly carried out which should impose on each province the duty of making good to the central Government the sums expended in excess of the provincial revenues on the relief of its population in time of famine.

174. A danger incidental to any system of localizing the cost of famine relief in the present state of Indian society is that it would be likely to exercise a prejudicial effect on the feelings, still very partially developed, which should prompt the landowners to acknowledge their responsibility for helping the poorer agricultural classes. The general testimony is that, with but rare exceptions, the large landed proprietors have not satisfactorily realised the hopes which were formed when their position was recognised by the Government, and experience indicates the small degree of assistance given by them in alleviating the sufferings of the people. This state of things would be rendered still worse if local proprietors were made to feel that the relief of famine was exclusively entrusted to them, and that it immediately entailed additional taxation on themselves; for the Government, instead of being able to depend more fully on the co-operation of the wealthier classes in meeting distress, might find their influence directed rather to conceal it.

And to the character of the men concerned in working it.

175. The Government has accordingly, and we think with good reason, proceeded very cautiously in its arrangements for localizing the expenditure which famines must involve. It was declared\* that the local Governments should henceforth be regarded as responsible, "to the full extent of what was possible," for providing the means of protecting the people of their own provinces against famine, and of meeting the cost of relief when famine actually occurred. As to the first of these objects, arrangements were made under which a guarantee might be given by each province for the interest on the capital expended on its own railways and canals, the sources of income necessary for the discharge of this liability being at the same time entrusted to it. As to the second, it was expected that by economical and judicious control of the expenditure on the numerous branches of the administration which have been transferred to provincial Governments, a balance would be secured which would be available for purposes of relief, and that such balances standing to the credit of provincial revenues should be exhausted before the Imperial treasury could be drawn upon. But it was recognised that there was a limit beyond which the provincial revenues could not supply relief, and that resources must be created from which the central authority could supplement provincial funds on occasions of widespread and severe famine; and it was to this end that arrangements were made to secure a surplus of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions of income over ordinary expenditure, in addition to the annual surplus of half a million otherwise regarded as proper. It was determined that this surplus should not take the form of a fund specially allocated to meet the cost of famine relief, because such an arrangement would be financially inconvenient and objectionable. The intention was simply that a source of revenue should be provided which would enable the Government to carry out the principle on which it had for some years insisted—that the relief of famine distress must be regarded as a charge constantly liable to recur, which must be met like all other obligatory items of State expenditure. The money obtained, or so much of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions as remained after meeting charges for famine during the current year, was to be applied to the discharge of debt, or the prosecution of remunerative public works of a character likely to give protection to the country against the effects of drought. Such works might be expected to produce an income equal to the interest on the capital spent on them, and thus lead to a result financially identical with the discharge of debt, but otherwise more beneficial from the protection given by the works. As the Government was engaged in carrying out productive public works, the expenditure on which involved annual loans to the extent of 3 or 4 millions, the plan practically operated in reducing, to the extent of the surplus, the sum to be thus borrowed.

Modified application of the principle. \* 27th December 1877.

176. We see no reason to doubt that the general arrangements thus made were in the actual circumstances well suited to meet the difficult problem that had to

Sufficiency of this system.

be solved, nor is it easy to see how such heavy and irregularly recurring charges as those that arise from the relief of famine on a great scale of severity and extent could otherwise be met than by borrowing when the calamity occurs, and by discharging the debt in times of prosperity, or securing such an increase of revenue from productive works as shall cover the interest on the debt.

How far  
provincial  
revenues  
can meet  
expenditure,

177. The extent to which the provincial revenues at the disposal of the local Governments will enable them to meet famine expenditure is a subject on which we need not enter at length. In a time of exceptional financial pressure, such as every period of famine must be, there can be no question that any outlay which is not obligatory should be postponed, and so far as the ordinary and necessary expenditure on public works can be directed to the relief of persons in distress, this also will be advisable. The extent to which aid from the resources of the central Government should be given, will have to be determined as each case arises, and there can be no doubt that in all cases of severe drought this liability will occur.

Or be used  
to guarantee  
interest on  
protective  
works.

178. There is, however, one direction in which the responsibility and power of usefulness of the local Governments could be enlarged in respect to famine relief. The surplus created for famine purposes may, under existing arrangements, be applied to the prosecution of public works likely to mitigate the consequences of famine, whenever the income of those works can be reasonably expected to cover the interest on their cost, and thus to secure the Government from charge on their account. In extension of this policy, we think that all reasonable facilities should be given to the local Governments to undertake works likely to protect their provinces against the results of famine, even if not of a character to be immediately remunerative, in every case in which they can secure the Government of India against eventual loss by the specific allocation of some part of their provincial revenues. Nor does it appear to us in any way objectionable in principle to levy special local rates or cesses either on a whole province or some smaller area, in order to provide a fund from which such guarantee may be obtained.

Employment  
of local funds  
to extend  
communica-  
tions.

179. The future power of the country to resist the pressure that arises from drought is so immediately dependent on the improvement of the means of internal communication that it is in our opinion impossible to exaggerate the importance of striving to accomplish this in every practicable way, and the arrangements above indicated afford an obvious and easy method of extending the application of local resources under local financial responsibility to this paramount object. During the late years of famine India was saved by its railways from disasters, the bare possibility of which should serve as a warning not to postpone the extension of works of this class to which the country must mainly look for alleviating the horrors of famine.

Application  
of this sug-  
gestion to  
Madras and  
Bombay.

180. In Madras and Bombay, the natural features of which provinces add much to the difficulties of transport, such works are more especially necessary. The additional rates on land, which were imposed in Northern India in 1878, and in Bengal in the previous year, and which constitute one of the chief sources of the famine surplus of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions, were not extended to Madras and Bombay, partly for reasons which had reference to the position of those territories at the moment. The question now presents itself whether there still are grounds for considering that these provinces should be exempt from the burdens which have been imposed on the land elsewhere to aid in meeting the liabilities caused by famine expenditure, though, as the effects of the recent scarcity had not passed off in 1878, and as the equalization of the salt duties then effected led to their increase in Madras and Bombay, it was naturally thought inexpedient at that time to extend the additional rates on land to these provinces. If the Government should be of opinion that the time has come when these considerations may be regarded as no longer operative, and that the additional rates could be imposed without placing undue pressure on the landholders, we think that the early adoption of such a measure would be expedient, and that its efficacy would be secured and the objections to it diminished by providing that the income obtained should form an addition to the provincial revenues, to be specially and exclusively devoted to the prosecution of such works of a protective though not financially remunerative character as may be approved by the local Governments in those provinces, and to be applied either in the form of direct grants, or of a guarantee to the Government of India of the interest on the capital provided by it for these undertakings.

Financial  
responsibility  
cannot be

181. If the difficulty of extending financial responsibility for famine expenditure to the provincial Governments is extreme, it becomes insurmountable, in the present

condition of India, when we descend to the smaller local divisions of the country, such as districts, local fund circles, or municipalities. To admit of any steps being taken to impose on the tax-payers within such areas the duty of paying for the cost of famine relief locally incurred there must manifestly first be introduced into India a law of settlement, under which no applicant should be entitled to relief except in the district or other area to which he is properly chargeable. This would be peculiarly necessary in the case of municipalities, which are liable to be crowded in times of distress by an influx of strangers, the cost of supporting whom could not justly be imposed on municipal funds. We are unable to suggest any system under which so artificial and necessarily complicated an arrangement could be carried out. Nor are there wanting other grave causes of doubt as to the expediency of attempting anything like the framing of a poor law for India. The doctrine that in time of famine the poor are entitled to demand relief from the funds of any definite area would probably lead to the doctrine that they are entitled to such relief at all times, and thus the foundation would be laid of a system of general poor relief, which we cannot contemplate without serious apprehension, and the adoption of which could hardly be advocated unless on proof of its absolute necessity. It would be in a high degree impolitic to introduce the idea that relief of the poor in ordinary times is a regular part of the duties of the State in any of its departments or branches, or to depart from the broad principle that it is only in exceptional seasons of difficulty that State relief should be given.

extended to areas smaller than a province;

182. But without going so far as to enforce financial responsibility, we think it highly desirable to impose executive responsibility on municipal committees and local district organizations, and so to enlist their administrative aid in the actual management of relief under Government supervision. We consequently advise that where these institutions exist it should be made a recognised part of their duties to co-operate in famine relief, and that so far as practicable the public works which they are in the habit of carrying out should in time of distress be made the means of adding to the employment of the part of the population requiring help. The municipal authorities should be responsible for carrying out all relief measures necessary within their limits, receiving from the Government such pecuniary aid as may be requisite for the proper fulfilment of the duty. From the completeness of their organization, their local knowledge, the comparatively small area within which they act, and the strength of the available staff, it should follow that relief measures ought to be conducted in municipalities with great efficiency.

But executive responsibility can and should be extended.

#### VIII.—*Miscellaneous.*

183. A few points remain which cannot well be brought under any of the foregoing heads, but which we consider of sufficient importance to be mentioned here among the main rules of action which should be followed in times of famine.

184. One of these is the amount of food required by workers and non-workers. The conclusion we draw from a careful examination of the evidence of authorities in all parts of India is, that on an average a ration of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per diem of the meal or flour of the common coarser grain of the country suffices for an ordinary working adult male. In the rice-eating countries an equal weight of rice may be accepted in lieu of flour, and in any case the ration should include a suitable proportion of pulse. A man doing light work would require about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs.; and the ration which consists of 1 lb. of flour with a little pulse has been found sufficient to support life in numerous relief-houses, where no work is exacted, all over the country. On these bases the diet scale should be built up, it being understood that a female requires a little less than a male, a child below twelve years of age about half the allowance of an adult male, and a non-working child below six or seven about half as much as a working child. On relief-works, however, where a money wage is given, the rate of pay should be such as to leave a slight margin above the actual cost of the flour, so as to allow for the purchase of salt, pepper, and other condiments and firewood, and to avoid the risk of the wage being insufficient to purchase the full ration of food. Whenever it is necessary to supply people with a kind of food to which they are unaccustomed, the result should be carefully watched, and endeavour should be made to counteract, by some adjustment of the dietary, the unfavourable results which will probably arise from the change.

Amount of food required.

185. As to that class of applicants for relief which consists of small artisans, who in a time of famine can get no employment and find no market for their productions, the question arises whether and how far it is possible to give them employment in

Employment of artisans.

their own walk of life. This is certainly desirable, if it can be done conveniently; but if the number in these classes is small, and the time and labour necessary for making arrangements for their employment in special trades would be better spent on matters affecting large masses of people, then the interests of the majority must prevail. Blacksmiths and carpenters and to a less extent bricklayers and masons and other crafts would find employment on public works. Weavers are the most numerous class among artisans who habitually require relief, and much employment has in many instances been given to them in their own trade. The thread which is spun by impoverished females in respectable families can be given to weavers to turn into cloth at rates corresponding to those of the market, and the cloth thus woven can generally be disposed of in the relief-houses and hospitals. If there is any surplus at the end of the famine it should be sent for sale to some distant market, so as not to interfere with the local sales and deprive the weavers of work when times begin to improve. The other artisans who require help, such as potters, tanners, &c., are generally too few to be employed in their trades without putting more urgent work aside; and in such cases all that can be done is to offer them employment on the relief-works, and in very few cases will such work be inappropriate to their ordinary habits.

Orphans.

186. In all great famines large numbers of orphaned or deserted children have been left in the hands of Government. Till lately the practice has been to make them over to orphanages established by Missionary Societies, in which the children are brought up as Christians. Objections have of late years been urged to this practice; and an alternative plan has been followed of making them over to Hindus or Muhammadans who have applied to receive charge of them. We conceive that, as matters now stand, both these systems must be adopted, but the latter one should have the preference as far as it is possible to carry it out. The State should not take advantage of the helpless position of such orphans to encourage proselytism, but it is bound to make due provision for their moral and physical welfare. Supposing there are rival applicants for the care of a Hindu or a Muhammadan child, the person most entitled to receive the child would be a co-religionist, provided he is of such respectability and character as will give security for the proper bringing up of the child. But there have been so many cases of such children being brought up to a life of prostitution or of semi-domestic slavery that an officer would not be justified in making over a child, especially a female child, without inquiry, to any applicant who may appear. Muhammadan families, among whom there is no question of caste, will generally be found ready to receive Muhammadan children, but for low-caste Hindu children suitable applicants will rarely come forward, and such children will generally remain on the hands of the State. Efforts should be made to induce respectable and charitable persons to adopt the orphan children, in preference to any other course; but when these have been exhausted the children may properly be entrusted to any well-conducted orphanage under due supervision, and with the proviso that they should always be reclaimable by their parents or by near relations who may have a right to demand the care of them.

Private  
charity.

187. Native society in India is justly famous for its charity. It is owing to the profound sense which is felt by all classes of the religious duty of succouring, according to their means, the indigent and helpless who have claims on them as members of the family, the caste, or the town or village, that in ordinary times no State measures of relief are needed. Native charity, however, does not work according to the English pattern. It does not tend to organization or co-operation among those who bestow it; it consists too much in giving a small dole to numerous applicants rather than in providing completely for the wants of a few applicants. When scarcity increases and deepens into famine, this liberality naturally decreases with the diminishing ability of the well-to-do classes to give, and at last it almost comes to an end; while the number and the wants of the applicants rapidly increase. Such charity is to be encouraged at the beginning of distress; and in a slight scarcity which does not grow to a famine it is often sufficient to meet all local requirements; but when famine has once set in with severity it may become a serious evil unless it can be brought under some systematic control. The rumour that doles of food or money are liberally given in any town penetrates into the country, unsettles men's minds, and makes them disinclined to honest exertion. When they flock to the town the want of organization results in the stronger paupers getting more than the weak who need help most, and sometimes in the latter being deprived altogether of their food. The element of chance which this system contains, under which more than is necessary for subsistence may be



obtained one day, even though less may be obtained another day, is more attractive to many paupers than the regular distribution of the bare means of subsistence; and this uncertain and unequal provision of food often leads to disease and death. When once Government has taken the matter thoroughly in hand and provided relief in one shape or another for all who need it, and a proper inclosed place of residence for all casuals and beggars, street-begging and public distribution of alms to unknown applicants should be discouraged, and if possible entirely stopped.

188. Under the system of Government relief which recognises the responsibility of the State to provide for all who really require relief, there does not appear to be any reason for making an appeal to the public to aid the Government by their contributions. This is a relic surviving from a past state of things, and is unsuitable where efficient relief measures are carried out on a uniform plan designed to give security to the whole population, at the public cost, and on the responsibility of the Government. Such full responsibility having been accepted, the spontaneous contributions of private persons, given for the purpose of supporting the lives of the famine-stricken, are as much out of place as they would be in meeting any other public charge; though something may still be done towards supplementing the subsistence ration of Government with small comforts, especially in the case of hospital patients, of orphans, and of the aged and infirm, and any charitable assistance of this kind should be welcomed and encouraged, provided it is so administered as to work in with the Government organization and system. But when the famine is coming to an end there is a wide and useful sphere for private charity in restoring the sufferers as far as possible to their original position, or in giving them a little capital with which to start again in their old modes of life. This was done with excellent results, by the aid of the munificent charity of England, in Madras and Mysore at the close of the famine in 1877-78. The State cannot properly expend the money raised by taxation on such objects, though it may certainly lend its officers to assist in the work of distributing charitable contributions in the most useful way. Subscriptions raised at the end of a famine for the purpose of restoring his bullocks to the cultivator, his implements to the artizan, or of giving a little money to a petty shopkeeper to get together the articles necessary for his stock-in-trade, if disbursed by competent and judicious persons, would be of the greatest benefit in assisting the population to recover from the blow they have received.

Utilization of public subscriptions at the close of a famine.

189. With regard to the treatment of the subjects of Native States who may apply for relief in British districts, three courses have at times been followed. The usual one has been to make no distinction as to origin, but to treat all comers alike without inquiry. In the late famine in the south, in some cases such immigrants were separated from the local poor and sent back to their own country, or the State to which they were believed to belong was requested to send an officer to identify and take back its subjects. A third course was advocated by the Government of Madras in 1877, that a list should be kept of such immigrants and the bill for their support should be sent in to the State from which they came. We consider that the first of these three courses, that of treating all applicants for relief alike, whatever their nationality, is the right one. The attempt to discriminate cannot be successful, for as soon as the people learn its object they deny their true origin; and the attempt to relegate them to a country from which they fled because they dreaded starving in it, may be both futile and cruel, and will probably only lead to increased habits of wandering. The British Government might with propriety endeavour to induce the Native States to take proper measures for the relief of their own poor, as far as possible on the general system adopted in British territories, and the records of successive famines show that Native Rulers are becoming more and more alive to this duty, and ready to perform it. It will be for the Government of India to consider what degree of responsibility, pecuniary or otherwise, may attach to any State which neglects this important duty, but beyond this no further question should arise as to whether applicants for relief are emigrants from Native to British districts, or from British to Native districts, or from one part of the British territory to another.

Treatment of subjects of Native States.

190. The history of Indian famines shows what a large part local and temporary migration plays in the measures which the population of India take to protect themselves in time of famine; and it is necessary to consider what the policy of Government should be as regards controlling it or working it into the general relief system. There are two main kinds of migration to be dealt with. One is migration for the sake of cattle, to find pasture; the other for the sake of the emigrant's own safety, to find food or employment; and there is a third or spurious kind, viz., aimless wandering. Of the first kind of migration we have

Migration—  
(1st) to preserve the cattle;



examples in the famine of 1868, when herds of cattle were driven from Western Rajputana to Malwa, Central India, and the Sub-Himalayan pastures; and in 1876-77, when the cattle of the Deccan, Mysore, and Madras, were driven to the forests on the Western Ghâts. Such migration is purely beneficial to those who start early enough on the quest; and though it often entails great losses on those who start late and arrive when all the best pastures have been occupied, the loss would probably have been as great had they remained at home. All that Government can do here is to aim at some control over the distribution of the incoming cattle, to open one tract after another as the first becomes filled, and to disseminate information as to the best roads to be taken. It may be useful also to adopt the course taken by the Bombay Government in 1877 to facilitate the transport by rail of cattle travelling towards the pastures, and to place fodder for sale along the most frequented roads, though the latter measure proved to be unnecessary.

(2nd) to preserve human life;

191. The second kind of migration is meant to be either permanent or temporary. As to permanent emigration, there is always in famine years a considerable increase to the normal number of voluntary emigrants in the colonies and elsewhere; but the efforts made by Government to stimulate this (as in Behar in 1874, and Madras in 1877) have been extremely unsuccessful. The class of people with whom Government has to deal in its relief measures are not the class most suitable for permanent emigration to a distance, or most likely to undertake it. The true emigrant class, should be, and as a rule is, composed of the stoutest and most self-reliant; while the class most requiring relief are the weakest and least self-supporting of the population, and peculiarly open to panic and to suspicion of the motives by which the Government is influenced. It is difficult, therefore, for Government to include permanent emigration among its relief measures in time of famine. The question how far emigration may be looked on as a safeguard in the future against over-population will be considered in the second part of our Report. As to temporary migration, there is commonly a great readiness to flock to any place where there are hopes of employment and food. Thus in 1877 the numbers who travelled to the coffee plantations of the Nilgiris, the Wynad, and Coorg, and to Ceylon, in the hope of getting employment were very large; and in all famines the tendency of beggars to collect in towns has been remarked. It has frequently happened that the numbers thus migrating have far exceeded the powers of the country or town into which they penetrate to afford them employment or food, and great misery and mortality have ensued. Attempts have been made to prevent such migration, either by stopping the people on the roads or drawing a cordon round the town, or by relegating them to the country from which they came. These measures have generally been unsuccessful, and have often caused as great misery as that which they were meant to prevent. It is to be hoped that the arrangements we have suggested for village inspection and relief will obviate to a great extent this tendency to migrate, but should it still arise, efforts should be made to discourage it by spreading information as to the condition of the tract to which the tide is setting, and to arrest the movement at its outset. The only steps that can usefully be taken beyond this are to provide the usual measures of relief, such as relief-works and relief-houses, in the most suitable places where such immigrants collect in large numbers.

(3rd) Aimless wandering.

192. The evils of the third kind of migration—aimless wandering—have been keenly felt in the recent famine in the south of India; and the Bombay Government has sought for legislative power to enable its officers in such cases to make the acceptance of relief compulsory. It is evident that such power, if given, should be carefully limited, as it might be used so as to cause a panic, and to make the State relief unpopular; but we believe that if used with discretion, and confined within narrow limits, it would be useful. The power, indeed, has been assumed as a matter of necessity by many discreet and humane officers; and if in doing so they have gone beyond the law, the law should be amended so as to cover such acts. No such power, however, should extend to people who persist in remaining in their houses, even though they may appear to have no means of subsistence there; it should be confined to those who have cut themselves off from home, and who are either wandering along roads or begging in towns. Such persons may with propriety be conducted, even against their will, to relief-houses or relief-works, according as they are unable or able to work.

How to meet cost of improved administration.

193. In concluding this portion of our Report we desire to explain that we have intentionally avoided any attempt to make a particular estimate of the probable cost of the administrative measures suggested for the permanent improvement of the

statistical records and the creation of a more effective Agricultural Department, and it will suffice for our present object if we state that we think it unlikely that the additional yearly charge caused—if these suggestions are adopted—would materially exceed one hundred thousand pounds. No useful purpose would be gained by our offering an opinion as to how far any additional charge for such objects might properly be regarded as merely involved in the necessary improvement of the ordinary administration, or how far it should be held to be a measure connected with famine relief, and so fairly chargeable against the special famine surplus. Even if the latter view be adopted in respect to the whole charge, the practical efficacy of the financial measures of insurance adopted in 1878 will not be impaired. Should the net surplus, after meeting these extra charges, be no more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions, there would still be provided the means of discharging  $12\frac{1}{2}$  millions of debt in 10 years, and thus of reducing the net yearly charge for interest by more than 500,000*l.*, an amount which, according to our calculations, will be amply sufficient for the prevention of any increase of the permanent debt by reason of the expenditure on famine relief.

194. We consequently have no hesitation in commending to the favourable consideration of the Government the measures which have been detailed in our Report, in the confident belief that the necessary charge they may involve, so far from leading to any financial inconvenience, will be followed at an early period by material improvements in the country, which will not only add directly to its present resources, but increase its permanent power of contending successfully with the terrible scourges of drought and famine to which it must ever be liable. Conclusion.

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July 7, 1880.

## Dissent on certain Points from the Report of the Indian Famine Commission.

We think that a more simple principle of treatment for a famine-stricken region than that set forth under heads II. and III. in this Report would better secure the saving of life and the maintenance of order, without an undue pressure on the resources of the State, with less dislocation of official duties, and no disruption of the mutually helpful bond of village society. The people of England can hardly realize the loss by death in the last Indian famine. Upwards of five millions of human beings, more in number than the population of Ireland, perished in that miserable time. If the people of this vast metropolis, with the millions in its neighbourhood, were all melted away by a lingering death, even this would not exceed in numbers the loss of India. A result so fearful in extent, and so heartrending in its details, was brought about by want of timely preparation to meet a calamity which, though irregular in its arrival, is periodical and inevitable.

### FAMINE ADMINISTRATION.

Timely preparation indispensable for the successful treatment of famine.

1. The great difficulty hitherto felt in famine administration in India has been in the disorganization arising among multitudes of people, landless labourers and their families, suddenly deprived of their usual employment, without stores of food, who, when the last measure of grain is reached, break away from their villages in despair, and "wander" in search of food or employment. The attempt to cope with this, in dealing with millions of people, without due preparation, overtaxes the working power of the State and has led to frightful confusion, waste, and expenditure, and to untold misery and death.

The cost of relief so moderate as to admit of no financial excuse for famine deaths.

2. The estimate made in Section 75, page 26 of this Report, shows, from past experience, that the largest population likely to be severely affected by famine at one time may be taken at 30 millions, 10 per cent. of whom we may reckon it may be necessary for the State to relieve for an average of a year. The cost of this for 3 millions of people, at 3% a head, at famine prices, would be 9 millions, and this would provide relief on a scale double that given in Madras and Bombay in 1876—78. As famines of this magnitude have not occurred at an interval of less than 12 years, it would appear that the annual reserve fund of 1,500,000% now made by the Government, if so applied, should amply suffice to meet this calamity. On the Indian population this would be an extremely small expenditure on poor relief, not one fortieth part per head of that of the United Kingdom. The amount is so moderate that if acute distress, and its consequent terrible mortality, can be prevented by such an insurance fund, no financial excuse can be admitted to justify famine deaths. Nor should any practice be adopted which needlessly aggravates the distress, or is likely to lead to increased mortality.

The first object of famine administration should be the saving of life, and the mode by which that has been most successfully accomplished.

3. We will assume that the first object of famine administration by the British Government in India will be to save life. In all the famines on record which have occurred in India, that of Behar in 1874 is the only instance in which this object, though at an excessive cost, appears to have been satisfactorily accomplished. There was early and active intervention by the Government in securing an assured supply of food. No distance or other tests were used to repel the needy applicant for work or aid. The village system was as

much as possible left undisturbed. Useful work was found for the capable workers of the population, and the infirm and really necessitous, who could not work, had food distributed to them in their villages by the local authorities, under proper supervision. The small landholders, to the number of several hundred thousands, received advances from their superior landlord, the Government, to tide them over the worst of the time, and nearly the whole of these were recovered. The collection of revenue was promptly suspended, and some proportion of it afterwards altogether remitted.

4. If an adequate and timely supply of food has been arranged for, either by importation from other parts of India or private storage in localities difficult of access, we should divide the people needing relief into two classes, those capable of doing remunerative labour, and those who are not. The general testimony of the officers of the Public Works Department shows that remunerative work can only be got from persons in bodily condition capable of labour. The class who suffer most from famine are those who have no land, field labourers, weavers, and village artisans. When employment fails them they have no margin to fall back upon. It is essential to their safety, therefore, that when ordinary sources fail Government should have employment prepared for them. In those districts of the country which are periodically subject to famine permanently useful works of public utility should be prepared, to be then ready for execution. On the approach of famine, these should be thrown open to all capable workers, under the superintendence of the Public Works Department. No test would be required, as a full return in work would be given to the Government for wages paid by the "piece" system, the ordinary rates being paid, on a scale adjusted in accordance with the market price of food. The works would thus cost, to the extent of such variation, more than if carried out during times of average prices, but otherwise the cost of supporting this class through the famine would be repaid to the State by the value of the works of utility executed. This class, as it would include also the blacksmiths, carpenters, bricklayers, and masons, who could exercise their calling on the public works, would probably comprise two thirds of the people requiring the help of the State, if measures are taken at an early period before the people have become emaciated.

Mode of treatment suggested,—

1. For those capable of labour of a remunerative kind, under superintendence of the Public Works Officers.

5. To the remaining third, the persons who from age or infirmity, or being unfitted by their normal occupation, or other sufficient reason, for doing remunerative field work, food should be gratuitously supplied in their villages, on the lowest scale sufficient to maintain health, without exacting other labour than such sanitary or other light work as could be advantageously done near their homes. The administration of this, under official supervision, should be laid upon the village headmen and owners of property; and, in order to enlist their careful management, a proportion of the cost of the gratuitously supplied food might, where the ordinary circumstances of the people would admit of such a course, be repayable, by instalments, to the Government, by a rateable charge on the property of the village. By distributing the responsibility in this way the relief work would be comparatively easy, as in each village the number to be thus relieved would not exceed three to four persons in each hundred of the population.

2. For those not capable under village headmen, officially supervised.

6. The labouring class would thus be dealt with promptly, in an orderly manner, free from confusion and panic,—the capable workers passing at once under the charge of the professional superintendence of the Public Works officers,—and the weakly class remaining at home under the charge of the village officials, to whom they are individually known. By thus employing the capable workers, and maintaining the village organization, the distance and other tests, which proved fatal to hundreds of thousands of starving people in the last famine, would be rendered unnecessary.

Orderly manner in which each class would thus be treated.

7. The small landholders, and all of the landed class who stood in need of temporary aid, would naturally be under the care of the Civil officers of the Government, who should be authorized to make advances in money or food as they might deem necessary and judicious, and on the same principle to suspend for a time the collection of the revenue. If some portion of this

3. The landholders to be under the care of the Revenue Officers, who should have power to make advances, and suspend collection of revenue.

class desire to earn wages, they should be received on remunerative works without hesitation.

8. It is to meet the case of the incapable workers that it is recommended in the Report to retain the unsatisfactory "task-work" system, by which strong labourers are restricted to a limited amount of work, and the weak are compelled to fulfil their task under penalties sometimes dangerous to their lives to enforce—and also to employ the requisite accompaniment of "task-work," the complex machinery necessary for the prevention of fraud; a system which assimilates the unfortunate recipients of relief to gangs of convicts sentenced to hard labour, and the engineers in charge to jail warders. This "task work" system must not be confounded with "piece work," from which in India it has a quite different signification. If the distress consequent on famine is grappled with at an early period, before the people have become emaciated, the number of these incapables will be comparatively small, and the method of dealing with this fraction of the community, at once the most economical and the most humane, will be to admit them to almost gratuitous relief, administered on a scale sufficient to sustain life, but insufficient to attract wilful idlers.

#### GRAIN STORAGE.

9. Although the principles laid down under head V., pp. 49—54 of the Report, in regard to the action of Government in relation to the food supply, have our general concurrence, we are unable to adopt the views which find expression at paras. 160—164, inasmuch as the evidence which we collected has led us to form the opinion that, under present conditions, it might be not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, for the State to make provision in the manner condemned by our colleagues. There are certain localities in Southern, Western, and Central India which are now, and may continue to be for some time, distant from the lines of railway communication, and which are in an especial degree liable to visitations of famine. For these comparatively inaccessible tracts, which we may reckon at one fifth part of India, with a population of 40 millions, we suggest a plan of storage to show that the measure is not the financial impossibility indicated in the Report, and if our views as to its necessity be accepted, we recommend its being adopted tentatively on a limited scale, leaving the extension of the operation to be decided by the success or otherwise of the experiment. We are unable to place confidence in the Table at page 50, which shows an estimated annual surplus yield of five million tons of food grain. The average annual export of rice and grain from all India is one million tons, which should thus leave four million tons to be laid by, a quantity sufficient to feed 24 millions of people. As famines come but once in 12 years, there should in that period be an accumulated surplus sufficient to feed nearly 300 millions. And yet when famine does come, and then affecting at its worst not more than a tenth of that number, it is only by immense pressure on other parts of India, and at a quadrupled price, that the barest sufficiency of supplies can be obtained. This seems a clear proof that the alleged surplus must be greatly over-estimated. Considering, also, the admittedly "approximate and rough estimates" on which the belief in this surplus is based, and the exhausting practice of agriculture so generally followed in the cultivation of dry grain in India, we are unable to concur in the statement that "India as a whole now produces, and is likely long to produce, sufficient food for its population in any season of drought." The "prolonged teachings of the past" referred to in the Report are, as far as that country is concerned, wholly against such a conclusion. Population is increasing, the price of food is rising, the production of it as shown by exports scarcely advances, whilst, as the number of the landless class who depend on wages is constantly growing, the supply of labour in the absence of industries other than agriculture must soon exceed the demand. Already their wages bear a less proportion to the price of food than in any country of which we have knowledge. The common price of grain in the Southern States of America on which the free black labourer is fed, is the same as that of the Indian labourer, viz., 50 to 60 lbs. per rupee. But his wages are eight times that of

the Indian, 2s. to 2s. 3d., against 3d. a day, whilst the climate is much the same in its demands for clothing and shelter. This is a fact of extreme gravity as illustrative of the poverty of the Indian coolie or field labourer, not to be met by resting satisfied that "chronic famine is one of the diseases of the infancy of nations." For India as a nation has long passed its "infancy," and the task of the British Government is, by fostering diversity of occupation, to guard it against decline.

10. The food of two thirds of the people of India is grain, and of one third rice. The annual surplus of rice, as shown by the export, is so great that a sufficient supply from the current crop can always be relied on to meet a partial rice famine. But the export of food grain, other than rice, from India, during each of the last ten years, has been less than one day's consumption of the grain-eating population. There would thus appear to be no sufficient annual surplus within the country to meet the demand of a severe grain famine, without drawing part of their ordinary food from the unaffected districts, thereby diminishing their supply, raising the price, and thus extending the area and general prevalence of the famine. This has been the uniform effect of drawing supplies suddenly to the famine districts from other parts of India. Supplies from foreign countries are practically impossible. The densely peopled countries of other parts of Asia do not appear to export grain. And in a country where the annual surplus of grain is so small, and where it cannot be increased by foreign importation, the absolute need of reserves in seasons of scarcity, for the supply of places difficult of access, becomes almost imperative. The most effectual remedy for this would be to encourage the storage of grain in such localities in seasons of plenty.

Proportion of grain and rice used as food by natives of India.

No sufficient annual surplus of grain to meet the sudden demand of famine,

and foreign supplies not procurable.

Storage in seasons of plenty therefore required in localities difficult of access.

11. No treatment of famine has yet been successful in the preservation of life that has not been ready to be commenced at the earliest period of actual want. The food of the people is of the simplest kind, grain and salt, and a few condiments for a relish. The grain is easy to handle, bears storage in pits for many years, and the people themselves grind it as they require it. The pits are made in the ground, in a manner with which the natives are familiar, and cost nothing beyond the encircling ring of baked clay, and labour, in construction. We propose no new practice, but recommend that, in outlying places, the Government should, through their resident officials, do for the safety of the poorer class what the wealthier now do for themselves. The people live on different varieties of dry grain grown in their several districts, which is the specific food they are accustomed to. As this common grain is rarely an article of export, its storage would in no way interfere with the operation of foreign trade, and as the storage would be subdivided in every village it could be done without disturbance to the usual operations of husbandry. In seasons of abundance stores may very conveniently be made. A village of 400 inhabitants, cultivating 400 acres of grain, may be reckoned to have 40 of the class for whom storage is here proposed. A store of seven tons would suffice for this number during a year of famine, and as severe famines on an average come as yet but once in 11 or 12 years, the quantity so required might be secured out of two years of good crops during that interval, at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  tons for each time, without any pressure on the rest of the people, while the storage of that quantity of grain would be a simple and inexpensive operation.

Grain food easy to handle and to store.

Mode of storage simple and inexpensive.

and would not interfere injuriously with trade.

12. Where the administration of relief in time of famine has broken down, it has generally been due to an attempt having been made to combat an extraordinary emergency with ordinary means. But arrangements that answer their purpose fairly well in the ordinary conditions of society fall to pieces when those conditions are shaken to their base by an abnormal visitation such as famine. As a general principle it is manifestly inexpedient for the Government to undertake any functions which experience has shown can be adequately performed by private enterprise. In ordinary times, wherever a demand arises, trade will in due course furnish the supply; but we know from sad experience that in a sudden emergency, such as famine, trade has often been found wanting. Instances are on record of starving people, with money in their hands, being unable to purchase food which trade had either failed to bring to the locality, or which, under the influence of panic or greed, the traders refused to put into the market; and the reason

Ordinary appliances not adequate to cope with unusual emergencies.



is obvious. Trade as a rule acts cautiously, and is not influenced by sentiment. Its object is profit, and unless that is clearly discerned it is slow to move. There is much risk also in a speculation which might be altogether marred by a few falls of rain, which would convert imminent famine into moderate sufficiency." And thus, as a matter of fact, trade remains inactive until the uncertainty has become reality, when the task of replenishing the exhausted stocks, over an enormous area, is one of such vast proportions that, without railway advantages, it cannot be accomplished before famine becomes master of the situation, and trade supplies arrive too late to save the lives of tens of thousands.

There will doubtless be difficulties attendant on the practical working of the scheme, but they will not, we think, be found insuperable. On the other hand, it is certain that the stored provision of an adequate supply of food for the poorest class in every village would give time for trade to operate, and, by inspiring confidence among the people, would prevent wandering and the disruption of local and family ties, causes which have hitherto so much impeded the effectual administration of relief, and so greatly enhanced its cost.

13. The main difficulty arises in making a beginning, inasmuch as it is impossible to predict the locality on which famine will fall, and, if the scheme were to be carried out in its integrity at the outset, it would be necessary to make provision for the whole period of 54 years, though only one fifth of the store would be required in each 11 or 12 years of the famine cycle. As the value of our suggestion is to be tested by experiment we would propose to proceed gradually, making one locality after another safe, after careful trials had proved that the plan was likely to succeed. If success should be assured, the plan might then be systematically entered upon, on the basis of securing 666,000 tons in the first period of 11 years, which would be the whole quantity necessary to feed, for 54 years, 10 per cent. of the population of one fifth part of India, the proportion here assumed to be difficult of access. The grain would be bought in years of plenty, on the spot where grown, at 4*l.* a ton, delivered at the pits, and the cost of storage may be taken at 10*s.*, making together 4*l.* 10*s.* The quantity annually stored would be 60,000 tons, at the cost of about 270,000*l.* This, when all was got into working order, would be the annual cost during the first 11 years, making a total of 2,950,000*l.* for securing, for 54 years, one tenth of the poorest of the population of one fifth part of India, against the effects of drought. In the eleventh year we may reckon that one fifth of the stores will be required to meet a famine, and this quantity, at a cost of 594,000*l.*, should be replenished in the first two good seasons afterwards. This would carry the country on till the famine period recurred 11 years subsequently. The whole cost at the end of 22 years would be 3,564,000*l.*, or an annual average of 162,000*l.* A second fifth would then again be consumed, and again replaced at a cost of 594,000*l.*, raising the total expenditure from the beginning to 4,158,000*l.*, which again carries the country on to the third famine, in the 33rd year, at an annual cost now falling to an average of 126,000*l.* The third fifth will then be consumed and again replaced, raising the total cost to 4,752,000*l.*, but lowering the average annual cost for 44 years to 108,000*l.* And in like manner the fourth famine will then have eaten up the fourth fifth, to be again replenished before the 55th year, raising the total cost to 5,346,000*l.*; the average annual cost for the whole period having fallen to 97,000*l.* The last fifth will then be consumed by the fifth famine, leaving in store a fresh stock of four fifths to commence a new famine cycle. The whole expenditure to the end of the first cycle of 54 years would thus be 5,346,000*l.*, but this will leave stocks in hand sufficient to carry on for 44 years more.

We have put forward this proposal for partial storage more as a means of saving life than of saving money, but the certainty of the latter would appear to be quite as great as the former. The annual famine insurance fund of 1,500,000*l.* would in 55 years amount to 82,500,000*l.* One fifth of this, taken for the one fifth part of the country with which we have been dealing, would be 16,500,000*l.*, whilst the actual expenditure under our plan would be something less than one third of that sum; moreover, there would

remain in hand stocks to the value of 2,360,000*l.* as a provision against future famine for the poorer class, in four fifths of the country to which the system of storage had been applied. The argument in para. 161 of the Report by which it is attempted to be shown that, by the multiplication of interest at 10 per cent., the ultimate cost will be extravagant, is quite fallacious. The Government of India can raise money at 4 per cent., and, if any charge of interest for this object be legitimate, that should be the limit. But the necessary expenditure in making provision against famine comes out of the current revenue, and is no more chargeable with interest than the annual cost of any other branch of the public service.

14. Without desiring in any way to depreciate the efforts of the many able officials who during the last century have given their attention to the question of famine relief, we think that the terrible fact of five million people having been allowed to perish in the last famine is sufficient proof that past experience must serve more as a warning than a guide. The complete breakdown that then occurred was but a repetition, on a larger scale, of the failure which has characterized the administration of every Indian famine in this century, with the single exception of that of 1874, which was ruled by the principle that, before all other considerations, the saving of life should be the first object of a British Government, armed with absolute power, and therefore the more responsible for the lives of its helpless subjects. While we are thus unable to draw any comfort from the past, we do not differ from our colleagues in desiring to have labour in return for State relief, though only so far as it is at once capable and useful; nor do we at present counsel interference with trade, except in localities with which it has as yet imperfect means of communication.

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